

University of St. Thomas, Minnesota UST Research Online

Education Doctoral Dissertations in Leadership

School of Education

8-15-2018

Effective Leadership Practices of Successful Superintendents in Christian Schools

Paul Bootsma

University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, pbootsma@lynchs.org

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.stthomas.edu/caps_ed_lead_docdiss



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bootsma, Paul, "Effective Leadership Practices of Successful Superintendents in Christian Schools" (2018). *Education Doctoral Dissertations in Leadership*. 117.

https://ir.stthomas.edu/caps_ed_lead_docdiss/117

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at UST Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Doctoral Dissertations in Leadership by an authorized administrator of UST Research Online. For more information, please contact libroadmin@stthomas.edu.

Effective Leadership Practices of Successful Superintendents in Christian Schools

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP, AND COUNSELING OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

By

Paul E. Bootsma

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August 15, 2018

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS, MINNESOTA

Effective Leadership Practices of Successful Superintendents in Christian Schools

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality.
We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions
required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation Committee

Karen Westberg, Ph.D.
Dr. Karen Westberg, Ph. D., Committee Chair

Thomas L. Fish
Dr. Thomas Fish, Ed. D., Committee Member

Eleni Roulis
Dr. Eleni Roulis, Ph. D., Committee Member

August 16, 2018
Final Approval Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work and the lessons learned from it to God, my family, friends, and Christian schools. God has blessed me throughout this journey. He provided the energy and desire to complete this dissertation and doctorate. He provided the purpose – to learn, grow, improve, and lead for his Kingdom. He provided blessings, safety, and abundance - many miles, hours, and dollars. To God be the glory!

I also dedicate this to my wife, Rachel. She pushed, helped, cajoled, and demanded I get this thing finished! I don't know if I would have done it without her varied forms of encouragement. She drove when I needed to read. She parented the kids when I needed to write. She managed our family and home while I was away at class. I am grateful and humbled by her support for me and her service to God and our family.

Dedication also goes to my children and the rest of my family. Tyesha, David, Devonta, Eli, and Abram, thank you for your patience with my busyness, tolerance of my sleepiness, and encouragement through my work. My parents, Ken and Mary Beth Bootsma, encouraged me to go to college, taught me how to work hard, and showed me two different ways to lead. I am grateful to them both. To my siblings and in-laws, Greg and Julie Bootsma, and Barb and Erik Hoekstra, thank you for encouraging me through your words and your modeling to earn this degree. To my in-laws – the Andersons, the Klawiters, and the Gerdins, thank you for encouraging me, empathizing with the demands of this work, and modeling continuous learning through formal degrees, research, reading, experimenting, and the school of life.

I also dedicate this to the boards and staff of Southwest MN Christian High School in Edgerton, MN, and Lynden Christian Schools in Lynden, WA for their support and encouragement and opportunity to grow, learn, and lead through the pursuit of and completion of

this degree. These boards and administration team have been gracious, generous, and supportive through this journey in their words and actions.

My last dedication goes to all of the Christian education advocates and practitioners who love God and enhance his Kingdom through their calling to and support of Christian education. We often utter Kuyper's words or some iteration of them: "Oh, no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'" (2009). This is our purpose, our mission, our vision for Christian education – that everything we do, "every square inch," points to Christ including how we educate our children, God's children!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I certainly want to acknowledge Dr. Karen Westberg for her encouragement, insistence, patience, and attention to detail in working with me through the research and writing of this dissertation. Thank you also to the other members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Tom Fish and Dr. Eleni Roulis.

I also acknowledge my cohort members from UST Sioux Falls cohort 3. We worked hard, learned a lot, and spent many weekends together for several years. It was a pleasure to deepen relationships and challenge each other. In addition, I acknowledge the UST professors who joined us in Sioux Falls, particularly Dr. Sarah Noonan for her passion, charisma, nurturing, and encouragement.

Last, I acknowledge the eight Christian school superintendents whom I interviewed. They gave of their time and energy while being transparent and vulnerable with me about their lives and their leadership. They want others and Christian schools to flourish!

ABSTRACT

This qualitative, collective case study investigated the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents associated with growth and improvement in operations and student learning in Christian schools who are members of Christian Schools International. The purpose of this study was to describe and understand these effective leadership practices. Eight participants shared their practices and experiences as superintendents of Christian schools through interviews and questionnaires. The study revealed seven themes of effective leadership practices: faith in God and his calling to leadership; focus on mission, vision, and strategic planning; engaging in relationships; superintendent leadership with the board and administration team; gifted, educated, and passionate about leadership; pursue growth and excellence in and for the school; and practice effective leadership skills – habits, tasks, and practices. These themes are rooted in several theories which explained each of the themes: Covey's (2004a, 2004b) eight habits of effective people, Greenleaf's (2002) servant leadership, and the theory of transformational leadership. These superintendents shared their effective leadership practices from their training, their experiences, and God's calling to lead in Christian schools in order to serve Him with their gifts.

Keywords: superintendents, Christian schools, leadership, Covey, Greenleaf, servant, transformational, habits, effective practices, Christian Schools International

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose Statement and Research Questions.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
Leadership Behaviors of School Leaders.....	12
Effective Leadership Practices of Superintendents in Public Schools.....	14
Professional Organizations' Lists of Effective Practices of School Superintendents.....	17
Mission, vision, and core values.....	18
Ethics and professional norms.....	19
Equity and cultural responsiveness.....	24
Curriculum, instruction, and assessment.....	25
Community of care and support for students.....	27
Professional capacity of school personnel.....	28
Professional community for teachers and staff.....	28
Meaningful engagement of families and community.....	31
Operations and management.....	32

School improvement.....	33
Effective Leadership Practices of Superintendents in Christian Schools.....	36
Effective Christian school leadership practices.....	37
Types of effective leadership in faith-based schools.....	44
Transactional, transformational, and servant leadership.....	46
Analytical Theory.....	49
Covey’s Habits for Effective Leadership (Covey, 2004a).....	50
“Be proactive” (Covey, 2004a).....	51
“Begin with the end in mind” (Covey, 2004a, p. 95).....	52
“Put first things first” (Covey, 2004a, p. 145).....	53
“Think win/win” (Covey, 2004a, p. 204).....	54
“Seek first to understand, then to be understood” (Covey, 2004a, p. 235).....	55
“Synergize” (Covey, 2004a, p. 261).....	56
“Sharpen the saw” (Covey, 2004a, p. 287).....	57
“Find your voice; Inspire others to find their voice” (Covey, 2004b).....	57
Servant Leadership Theory	59
Transformational Leadership Theory.....	62
Theoretical Applications.....	65
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES.....	67
Research Design.....	67
Sampling Procedure.....	68
Participants.....	69
Description of Participants and Their Schools.....	70

Data Collection.....	73
Data Analysis.....	75
Research Validity and Reliability.....	76
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	79
Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership.....	80
Religious Faith, Growth, and Fulfillment.....	81
God’s Call to Leadership.....	82
Religious Leadership, Service, and Shepherding.....	83
Attributes for Leadership.....	84
Focus on Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning.....	85
Mission and Vision.....	86
Christian education focuses on students: Faith and excellence.....	89
Students changing the world for Christ.....	90
Using a strategic plan to support and advance the mission and expand the vision.....	91
Engaging in Relationships.....	92
Relationships with Staff.....	93
Relationships with Students and Parents.....	93
Relationships with Community Members.....	94
Establishing a Relational Culture.....	95
Superintendent Leadership with the Board and Administration Team.....	95
Providing Leadership with the Board and Administration Team.....	96
Styles of Leadership.....	99

Trust between the Board, Administration Team, and the Superintendent.....	100
Staffing Fit with the Mission and Vision of the School.....	100
Longevity and Succession Planning for Leadership.....	101
Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership.....	102
Educational Leadership Preparation, Careers, and Experience.....	102
Educational Leadership - Training, Support, and Experience.....	105
A Desire to Lead and Grow in Leadership.....	110
Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School.....	116
Excellence, Improvement, and Continuous Improvement.....	116
Growth Mindset with Humility.....	117
Change Management and Theory.....	118
School Success and Sustainability.....	119
Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, Practices.....	120
Prioritize, Organize, and Manage Their Work.....	120
Communication.....	121
Accessible, Visible, Present, and Approachable.....	121
Practice Self-care.....	122
Data-driven Action.....	122
Evaluate Staff.....	123
Working Hard.....	123
Applying Theory to Themes.....	123
Theory to Theme: Faith in Jesus and Calling from Jesus.....	124
Theory to Theme: Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning.....	125

Theory to Theme: Engaging in Relationships.....	127
Theory to Theme: Leadership with the board and administration.....	129
Theory to Theme: Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership.....	131
Theory to Theme: Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School.....	132
Theory to Theme: Leadership Skills.....	133
Conclusion.....	134
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	136
Conclusions.....	136
Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership.....	137
Focus on Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning.....	137
Engaging in Relationships.....	137
Superintendent Leadership with the Board and Administration Team.....	138
Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership.....	138
Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School.....	138
Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, and Practices.....	139
Discussion of the Findings.....	139
Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership.....	141
Focus on Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning.....	142
Engaging in Relationships.....	142
Superintendent Leadership with the Board and Administration Team.....	142
Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership.....	143
Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School.....	143
Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, and Practices.....	143

Implications of the Results of this Study.....	144
Recommendations for Further Research.....	147
Concluding Thoughts.....	148
REFERENCES.....	150
APPENDICES.....	159
Appendix A: LBDQ Definition of Subscales.....	159
Appendix B: Comparing Professional Standards for Educational Leaders with Authors on Superintendents in Christian Schools.....	160
Appendix C: Christian (Protestant) and Catholic Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Schools.....	162
Appendix D: Connecting and Comparing Leadership Concepts to Covey's <i>7 Habits of Highly Effective People</i> and <i>The 8th Habit</i>	164
Appendix E: School Leader Questionnaire for Demographic and Leadership Information.....	167
Appendix F: Interview Protocol for Effective Superintendents.....	168
Appendix G: Consent Form.....	170
Appendix H: Transcript Coding Sample.....	174
Appendix I: Coding Sample for Key Themes for Effective Leadership Practices.....	175

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: A Comparison between Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.....	17
Table 2: Williams' 19 Indicators of Engaging Leadership.....	40
Table 3: Examples of Indicators across All Standards (Boyle et al., 2016).....	43
Table 4: Attributes of Servant Leadership from 5 Major Authors/Scholars.....	61
Table 5: Leadership Factors.....	63
Table 6: Three Theoretical Frameworks for Effective Superintendents in CSI Schools.....	65
Table 7: Superintendent and School Pseudonyms, Gender, Experience, and Education.....	69
Table 8: A Comparison between Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and Seven Effective Leadership Practices.....	138

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Christian, private education has long been a choice for Christian families in the United States as they pursue an educational alternative for their children, which provides a biblically centered, rigorous instruction for its students. Because of this educational philosophy and quality, my wife Rachel and I, as Christians, educators, and parents, have chosen to commit our lives to teaching, leading, and serving in Christian schools. Recently, I accepted a position as a superintendent at Lynden Christian Schools in Lynden, Washington. Because I am new to the position and the work of superintendent, I was interested in researching where I, and other Christian school leaders, should focus our attention and effort, how we should posture our leadership, and what we should use as effective practices according to successful superintendents in Christian schools.

Christian education has quite a variety of participants and definitions. Many Christian denominations have their own variety of Christian education including Lutheran, Mormon, Catholic, and Seventh Day Adventist, to name a few. I serve and am interested in Christian education that has been shaped by the doctrine and theology of the Christian Reformed denomination. To summarize this Reformed denominational perspective on all of life and specifically education, we often refer to Kuyper's quote:

Oh, no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: "Mine!" (2009).

This perspective has long influenced the purpose and mission of our schools, families, and churches: Jesus Christ is Lord over all of it so all must be centered on Him including the Christian education of our children. These Christian schools focus on faith-integration

throughout the entire curriculum and school life, from school activities, to board governance, to staff compensation, and the curriculum of each course taught. This claim of Christ being Lord over all things is the focus of our mission as Christian schools, creating a unique set of circumstances for school leaders.

There are several unique expectations for school superintendents that come out of this Kuyperian world and life view, pursuing excellence and deep faith integration throughout the entire school. Following are several unique expectations that I have experienced that Christian schools place on the leadership of the school, particularly the superintendent as the daily leader:

- The superintendent is the spiritual leader of the Christian school. He or she is responsible for the spiritual health and direction of the staff, culture, and student instruction.
- The superintendent is responsible to the families that choose to send their children to the Christian school. These families make up the society of the organization, investing in their child's life by paying tuition for a Christian education. This transaction creates a unique dynamic, different than the public school experience where families are guaranteed a free and appropriate education.
- The superintendent is responsible for the financial sustainability of the school, keeping the cost of education for families in check while providing fair compensation for staff and resources for students.
- The superintendent is responsible for a unique, Christian educational excellence that can be supported through accreditation for the organization and state licensure for teachers.

The Reformed perspective and the supporting leadership expectations create a unique demand for excellence on the Christian school superintendent!

Christian education has a unique mission to serve God by educating his children, in partnership with the local church and the home, in order to transform the world for Him. Christian schools do this well. Cardus “is a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Drawing on more than 2,000 years of Christian social thought, Cardus works to enrich and challenge public debate through research, events, and publications for the common good” (2011, p. 40). In their extensive body of research, The Cardus Education Survey (CES) “studies alignment between the motivations and outcomes of Christian education, to better understand the role of Christian schools in students’ lives, in families, and in larger society” (2011, p. 5). The purpose of this survey was to determine the impact of Christian education on its graduates by exploring their lives and perspectives as alumni – how they are living out what they learned in school in their adult lives. The results of the survey are useful for parents who are considering school choices, for school leaders looking to improve their organizations, for donors wondering if their dollars have been and could be good investments, and for the general public seeing the impact of Christian education within the larger school landscape.

CES (2011) surveyed thousands of people, school graduates and leaders, in a mixed-methods research design to measure three outcomes of Christian education on the students: spiritual formation, cultural engagement, and academic development. The survey was performed over two years with five research teams working concurrently on complementary research projects. The first part was a quantitative study using 60-minute, web-based surveys filled out by 2,000 randomly sampled Americans aged 23-49. The second part was a qualitative study

involving 18 secondary schools in Canada and the United States in which the investigators interviewed the principal, two teachers, and four to six seniors in high school. The third part was also qualitative in which the investigators surveyed students from a specific Christian university and interviewed 127 of them. The fourth part was qualitative, implementing a mixed-methods, case study approach, beginning with surveys in urban Christian high schools. These surveys identified 94 participants who were interviewed to better understand the impact of faith traditions on students. The fifth and last part researched the tenure of Christian school leadership and was also qualitative using a mixed-methods approach where 647 people responded to the survey. A purposeful sampling of school heads was interviewed individually to understand leadership tenure and its impact on Christian schools.

Overall, the Cardus Educational Survey revealed several noticeable differences between the Christian education that students receive, comparing a Catholic school and a Protestant school.

- Academically, Catholic schools provide “superior academic outcomes, an experience that translates into graduates’ enrollment in more prestigious colleges and universities, more advanced degrees, and higher household income (p.13).
- Protestant Christian school graduates, compared to their peers, “have been found to be uniquely compliant, generous individuals who stabilize their communities by their uncommon and distinctive commitment to their families, their churches, and their communities, and by their unique hope and optimism about their lives and the future” (p. 13).

- Protestant Christian schools “provide a place where students become distinct in their commitment to their faith, but are not developing academically at any better rate than their public school peers” (p. 13)

Additionally and interestingly, Christian homeschooled students scored the highest in overall spiritual formation. Protestant Christian school students were the most culturally engaged in service to their community. Catholic schools prepared students the best in academics. The data are compelling for a variety of reasons.

The findings from the Cardus Education Survey show and tell us that the work of Protestant Christian education, which I will refer to as Christian education from now on, is valuable for spiritual formation and cultural engagement of students, but it has deep challenges. Christian education is important for the greater good, but the investment has quite a cost. These challenges and investments in Christian schools need leaders striving to improve in order to better prepare students for service to God’s kingdom socially, spiritually, physically, and particularly academically.

Statement of the Problem

School leaders in all schools often come up through the ranks from teacher to assistant principal to principal and on to superintendent as passions, interests, and qualifications allow. It seems that many of these leaders receive formal leadership training from a university. Schools and their supporting organizations seem to have ideas, documents, research, and evidence of their expectations for these leaders; however, from my experiences and conversations with other superintendents, many school leaders and school boards don’t heed, know, or regard the research to inform their leadership, particularly in private Christian schools.

I am interested in understanding effective leadership practices for superintendents in private Christian schools, particularly schools that are members of Christian Schools International (CSI), in order to improve Christian schools as well as the individual leaders within them. Christian Schools International is an educational service organization with about 400 member schools serving Christian families. Additionally, private Christian school boards need to be able to encourage, direct, and guide their leader. Ultimately, I hope to improve Christian school leadership, which will improve the implementation and fulfillment of the mission of these schools to challenge students to grow spiritually, academically, physically, and socially.

Challenges and opportunities abound in education and there is no exception in private, Christian education. So in support of the mission of Christian schools, I seek to face its challenges: religion and spirituality, organizational governance, administrative leadership, tuition and alternative funding, student enrollment, and quality, Christ-centered education. Determining the effective practices of superintendents in these Christian schools in order to more thoroughly address these challenges and ultimately improve Christian education for the mission and student learning in these schools will help. I will begin by explaining the challenges listed above.

People take their religion and spirituality seriously and have a wide variety of opinions and interpretations of how it should manifest itself in a Christian school. This is the challenge, whether a Christian school is connected to one Christian denomination or is inter-denominational. People's interpretation of their religion and spirituality can and do differ from schools' interpretations on issues of sexuality, creation, or money. This creates unique challenges for school leadership.

Christian schools also have unique organizational governance models whether they are parochial, or church-run, or parent-run. In these cases, a unique dynamic is created because of

the church or denominational influence adding a layer of complexity to the leadership of the Christian school or the parent-elected school board that oversees the mission and operation of the Christian school. In both cases, another layer of management is added to school leadership as well as the influence of lay people on complex educational management, which creates unique challenges for administrative leadership in schools. Superintendents are often challenged in these settings having to navigate the organizational influence of parents or church leadership and leadership in education.

Private schools are funded by student tuition and corresponding student enrollment, and sometimes alternative funding sources such as churches, endowments, or even sustainability businesses. As opposed to tax dollars, which fund public schools, Christian school leaders have to manage, generate, and solicit sustainability funds in order to meet the needs of an annual budget or support the capital campaigns that Christian schools have in order to maintain existing or build new buildings. These are unique financial challenges, specific to Christian schools.

Spiritual and religious leadership within quality, Christian schools is also a unique challenge for superintendents. While it can be safely assumed that Christian school superintendents are Christians, the challenge comes in leading the Christian school in ways that are spiritually healthy and productive for all involved – students, staff, parents, and community members. This challenge comes in two ways: Is the superintendent leading the Christian school in its spiritual growth? Are the people involved in the Christian school in agreement with the choices and direction of the superintendent? The challenges mentioned above create a unique picture of an environment for Christian leadership for school superintendents, giving evidence for the need for this study of effective leadership practices distinctly different from public school or even private school superintendents.

It is important to note here for clarification that public schools are part of the government's obligation to provide free and appropriate education to the population of the United States for students in primary and secondary grades. Public schools are funded through tax dollars. Private education is an alternative education for families who do not wish to have their children attend public schools for a variety of reasons. Generally, these reasons become the mission and purpose of the school. Private schools are generally privately funded through tuition. Christian schools are private schools that are faith-based. They are religious, typically supporting the beliefs of a specific religion or denomination of Christianity, such as Catholic schools, Lutheran schools, Mormon schools or inter-denominational Christian schools, to name a few. In order to support these inter-denominational Christian schools, I am researching the effective practices of superintendents in Protestant Christian schools, as described above.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe and understand the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents in successful schools with membership in Christian Schools International (CSI) by interviewing eight successful, experienced superintendents with four or more years of experience in their present or similar school setting. (Superintendent synonyms: head of school, executive director, president, chief executive officer).

The central question guiding this study was the following:

What are the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents associated with growth and improvement in CSI schools' operations and student learning?

The sub-questions were the following:

1. What is effective leadership in schools?

2. In what ways do previous educational training and experiences affect the work of successful superintendents?
3. What are the environmental, emotional, social, and spiritual experiences and perspectives of effective superintendents?

In a collective case study, I addressed these research questions by interviewing eight Christian school superintendents, who were identified by organizations that support Christian schools.

Definition of Terms

1. Christian education: private, non-public, education that is Christ-centered, integrating a Christian, biblical faith into all aspects of the curriculum, while remaining academically challenging and rigorous.
2. Christian Schools International (CSI): A Christian organization committed to supporting Christian schools and their employees in the effort of providing Christ-centered education to students.
3. Effective leadership: an exceptionality that is “hard to find, worth trying to learn about and emulate, and carries with it a high degree of respect and value” (Leithwood, 1995, p. 7); “ability to convert creativity, mental ability, and knowledge into results; thus, the ability to achieve” (Drucker, 2001, p. 192).
4. Successful school leadership: a positive impact on student growth and learning, supporting staff in instruction, collaborating with parents and the community, and successfully lasting in leadership/administration more than four years.
5. Distributed leadership: A perspective on leadership that centers around four ideas:

- Leadership tasks and functions: establishing instructional vision, school culture, staff climate, and professional development; monitoring instruction; procuring and distributing resources.
 - Task-enactment: how school leaders enact the tasks listed above with staff.
 - Social distribution of task-enactment: the negotiated order between leaders and followers and how they work together to accomplish the tasks.
 - Situational distribution of task-enactment: the situations in which these tasks are enacted is integrated into the environment of the school.
6. Shared Leadership: the practice of governing a school by expanding the number of people involved in making important decisions related to the school's organization, operation, and academics. In general, shared leadership entails the creation of leadership roles or decision-making opportunities for teachers, staff members, students, parents, and community members. (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013)
7. Collective Leadership: the combined effects of all sources of leadership and the possible differences in the contribution to such effects by each source, such as administrators, teachers, students, and parents. This is similar to the wider, broader term of distributed leadership (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, p. 530).
8. Authentic Leadership: Beard (2013) presents this framework.
- Self-awareness: an understanding of self, how the individual makes meaning of the world, and how both affect him or her over time.
 - Transparency: presenting one's authentic self to others to promote trust through openness.
 - Moral/Ethical Perspective: self-regulation by internal moral standards and values.

- Balanced Processing: objectively analyzing all relevant data before coming to a decision.

9. Transformational leadership:

- Idealized influence: The leader has charisma, exhibits moral and ethical conduct, is trusted, and gives vision and a strong sense of mission.
- Inspirational motivation: The leader has high expectations through shared vision, uses symbols and emotional appeals, and is an inspiration to followers.
- Intellectual Stimulation: The leader challenges beliefs and values of all involved, is creative and innovative, and finds new approaches and ways of doing things.
- Individualized Consideration: The leader listens to the individual needs of followers and coaches and advises followers. (Northouse, 2010)

This introduction chapter paves the way for the remaining four chapters: the review of literature, the methodology, the findings, and the conclusion. The review of the literature was examined and written in order to determine where more research needed to be performed. The methodology chapter explains the process that I followed to answer the research questions including interviewing eight superintendents and coding the interview transcripts. The findings chapter shares the results of the coding. In the fifth chapter, I share my conclusions, offer discussion, and give final comments.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on what the literature says about what effective school leaders do, whether men or women, in public schools, or Christian schools. Most of the literature focuses on school leadership in general, whether superintendents, principals, or assistant principals. The first section looks into leadership behaviors. The second section shares the practices of public school superintendents, and the third section takes a long look at effective practices of school leaders according to professional organizations or groups that have researched these practices based on school improvement. The last section of this review shares effective practices of Christian school leaders; however, the literature was quite sparse considering the prevalence of school leadership literature in general.

Leadership Behaviors of School Leaders

The literature on effective school leadership connects frequently to the studies of leadership in general. The connection from general leadership to school leadership happened frequently in the literature even through surveys, forms, or questionnaires. Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, and Slate (2008) use the *Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire Form XII (LBDQ)* to determine leadership behaviors of superintendents and principals in rural school districts in Texas, showing the significance of the *LBDQ* for school leadership. The *LBDQ Form XII* is an instrument that the Ohio Leadership Studies developed from Hemphill's work (Stogdill, 1963), and the basic premise was to describe the supervisors' effective leadership behaviors; there are two factors or scales: consideration and initiation, which have 12 subscales (see Appendix A). Canales et al. (2008) used the *LBDQ* to determine effective leadership behaviors by school leaders who had dual roles – both a principal and superintendent in small, rural school districts. Two hundred six teachers, 35 school board presidents, and 37

superintendents/principals were surveyed using the *LBDQ*. The board presidents and superintendents/principals agreed on the top three leadership behaviors required for school leadership success (Canales et al., 2008, p. 7):

1. Tolerance of freedom: allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action.
2. Representation: speaks and acts as the representative of the group.
3. Consideration: regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers.

These behaviors represent school leadership success which have similarities to the following study on essential behavioral leadership qualities.

Similarly, Oyinlade, Gellhaus, and Darboe (2003) conducted research on the 18 *Essential Behavioral Leadership Questionnaire (EBLQ)* items as they relate to effective leadership in schools for students who are visually impaired. They first determined the 18 essential behavioral leadership qualities by asking 10 educators (4 principals, 4 teachers, and 2 superintendents) what they thought these qualities were, and then the authors analyzed the responses, finding the 18 qualities. Once the qualities were determined, in 1998 they approached 28 of the 47 members of the Council of Schools for the Blind to participate in their study. Twenty-five schools in 25 states participated, and 294 surveys were completed out of approximately 900 that were sent out to the entire staff of all 25 schools for the blind. While this is a very specific focus on a specific school population, this is significant because of the general applicability of the *EBLQ* to schools in general. Oyinlade et al. (2003) found these 10 qualities to be the top ones for superintendents out of the 18 they had listed: honesty and good ethics, good listening skills, vision for the future, good communication skills, motivating, fairness, knowledge of policies, participative decision-making style, fiscal efficiency, and organization knowledge. These are valuable leadership qualities for school superintendents and leaders.

The *LBDQ* and *EBLQ* show the strong connection from leadership literature and research to education leadership literature and research. With this literature in mind, leadership, whether in churches, schools, businesses, or families, seems to have deep similarities throughout it.

Effective Leadership Practices of Superintendents in Public Schools

Kowalski (2006) discussed important aspects of effective school leadership, presenting the job description with additional advice for the public school superintendent. He addressed school board relations, public education governance and history, as well as resource management. These topics are effective practices and habits for school superintendents; however, most of Kowalski's topics do not get at the general leadership principles that I cover later in the theoretical section. I focus on describing Kowalski's sketch of the job of the superintendent.

Kowalski (2006) provided two sets of standards from the American Association of School Administrators and Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Standards (pp. 20-23) that emphasized the effective practices of school administrators. These standards and others are helpful in understanding and establishing effective practices and habits of successful Christian school superintendents as many of the roles and responsibilities are similar between the public and Christian school superintendent.

Following a presentation of the standards, Kowalski described the roles and conditions of practice for superintendents. He saw the superintendent as a teacher, manager, statesman, social scientist, and communicator; all of whom led in a variety of conditions in society and in schools. Kowalski (2006) painted a gray picture of the conditions: "Unlike their business counterparts, superintendents face more explicit legal constraints, a high dependency on government for resources, less decision-making authority, and more intensive external political influences" (p.

77). This gives us a glimpse into the conditions of the challenges for the superintendent.

Regardless of the fact that “public schools are reactionary institutions” (p. 61), they are certainly the single largest educator of America’s students and give the greatest representation of the environment and skill set it takes to be an effective superintendent.

Kowalski (2006) provided additional insight into the work of the superintendent. Organizations, school districts and their superintendents have much to contend with including organizational theory, climate, and culture. There was often a negative perception or at least an “ambivalence regarding experts and expertise” (Danzberger, 1994, p. 367). This suggested the need for superintendents to have a high-quality, functioning relationship with their school board as well as a deep understanding of the school district’s policies. It appears that the board to superintendent relationship is critical – the single most important relationship for effective leadership in schools. However, it is also vital that the superintendent have an understanding of the difference between leadership and management, particularly as it relates to instruction, personnel, vision-casting, and their general disposition. Interestingly enough, Kowalski (2006) made the following claim for a superintendent’s leadership, who must be “encouraged to be democratic, ethical, and transformational” (p. 211). This focuses on the realm of leadership; however, there are clear expectations for management from the superintendent as well. Kowalski (2006), made this point clear:

As a manager, a superintendent makes and enforces rules, controls material and human resources, strives for objectivity and rationality, and pursues efficiency. As a leader, a superintendent focuses on philosophy, purpose, and school improvement. Although leadership is clearly more essential to the central purposes of schooling, management is neither unimportant nor counterproductive to effective education. (p. 225)

The school superintendent must indeed *lead* and *manage* in order to be effective and successful within his or her school but also within his or her community.

Over the last decades, school reform has been a large focus in government and in school districts and individual schools. These reform efforts are appropriately hung on student learning improvements; however, the reforms' successes certainly seem to be linked to the effective or ineffective leadership of the school superintendent, which is often confronted by, according to Kowalski (2006), contemporary challenges such as political action, underfunding, vision-casting, improving school culture and climate, shortages of superintendents, and underrepresenting of women and people of color. Additionally, superintendents have their own personal challenges that can make or break their work: self-management – time, stress, decision, and communication; as well as time demands of the job, the very nature of the work, as well as the rewards and frustrations that come with the work (Kowalski, 2006).

In addition to Kowalski (2006), Sicconne (2012) and Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) had advice about school leadership, improvement, and reform. Siccone (2012) presented five essential sets of skills for school leaders:

1. Confidence in self and others
 2. Communication skills to listen, speak, and write for effective, productive outcomes
 3. Collaboration as a team effort to solve problems, reach goals, and planning strategies
 4. Coaching to develop the team of professionals for individual and organizational growth
 5. Continuous improvement as opportunity for growth for the organization for a purpose
- (p. vi)

Siccone advocated for and used Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's (ISLLC) six 2008 policy standards as the basis for the list above, which were the five sections of his book. Importantly, this supports Kowalski's view, Marzano's view, and the views of many other authors (Garrison, 2013; McCormick, 2011), as well as the professional standards listed in Table 1. While it is apparent that Marzano's 21 responsibilities of school leadership do not perfectly coincide with the others in Table 1, Marzano et al. (2005) presented a compelling, thorough case supporting the standards that they listed. Additionally, other authors support and bring credibility to Marzano, which provided the basis for using and emphasizing his work here.

Professional Organizations' Lists of Effective Practices of School Superintendents

I categorize the effective practices of school leaders according to the work of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), Kowalski (2006), Marzano et al. (2005), and American Association of School Administrators (AASA, The School Superintendents Association, ND) in Table 1. Although there are many lists available, these present the breadth and depth of the standards for educational leaders focused on student learning.

Table 1

A Comparison between Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

Professional standards for educational leaders (PSEL) from NPBEA (formerly ISLLC); also NASSP	Kowalski – <i>The School Superintendent</i>	Marzano, Waters, and McNulty – <i>School Leadership that Works</i>	AASA Standards
1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values	Personal leadership characteristics: ethical, integrity	Ideals/Beliefs	Values and ethics of leadership
2. Ethics and Professional Norms	Personal leadership characteristics: servant, transformational	Focus Flexibility Discipline Order	Values and ethics of leadership Policy and governance
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	Professional skills: Visionary, mission-	Culture	Leadership and district culture

	focused, strategic; goal-oriented		
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Professional skills: Successful school management, performance, and improvement	Knowledge of and Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Curriculum planning and development Instructional management
5. Community of Care and Support for Students	Professional skills: Focus on improved instruction and student achievement	Affirmation Communication	Leadership and district culture
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	Professional skills: Governance: positive board interactions and relations	Monitoring/Evaluating Input Intellectual stimulation Resources	Human resources management
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	Professional skills: Collaborative leadership: board, staff, students, families, stakeholders	Contingent rewards Relationships	Leadership and district culture
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community		Outreach Visibility	Communications and community relations
9. Operations and Management		Situational awareness	Organizational management
10. School Improvement		Change agent Optimizer	

I am using the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) 2015 as the most robust list and, therefore, the headings for this section of the literature review on public school superintendents. Following each of these headings or titles is a statement that “succinctly defines the work of effective educational leaders in that particular realm” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). After these statements, I share what the literature says related to them.

Mission, vision, and core values. As many are aware, it is essential for any organization or business to have a clear mission, leading it to a vision for the future that is rooted in core

values. The literature affirms this statement, and I provide evidence after this statement:

“Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of *each* student”

(NPBEA, p. 9).

The goals and expectations of the school must support the mission and then make up the vision and values. Several authors made this point and emphasized the importance of “superintendents pushing core leadership priorities” (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012, p. 6; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). With the mission, vision, and values in proper alignment, school leaders can establish norms. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) supported having mission, vision, and values with a responsibility that supports student academic achievement:

- Ideals/Beliefs: The school leader “communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 42).

These ideals and beliefs are the mission, vision, and values for which the PSEL advocated. It is evident that the school leader must promote these. Dantley (2003) pushed the reader to use purpose-driven leadership as opposed to a positivistic approach toward leadership, which tends to reinforce the status quo. The positivistic approach focused on knowledge within natural phenomenon but was based on empirical evidence, using what the research and data tells us in order to lead. Conversely, Dantley (2003) argued that school leaders need to be purpose-driven, focusing on a greater spiritual purpose that included personal critical reflection which reinforced the proper values and principles for leaders to follow, perhaps opposite of what the data claimed. Leaders must have a focused mission, vision, and core values.

Ethics and professional norms. Trust is established in leadership by behaving, deciding, and leading in ethical, normed, and collaborative ways within the community that is being led.

The literature supports this (Beard, 2013; Dantley, 2003; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Washington, Miller, & Fiene, 2007). “Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote *each* student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, p. 10).

According to Kowalski (2006), professional norms included expectations that leaders be democratic, ethical, and transformational. Understandably, leaders are expected to be honest, self-sacrificing, and collaborative in their leadership. Marzano et al. (2005) claimed that these four responsibilities are essential for school leaders to improve student learning:

- Focus: The school leader “establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention” (p. 42).
- Flexibility: The school leader “adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent” (p. 42).
- Discipline: The school leader “protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time of focus” (p. 42).
- Order: The school leader “establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines” (p. 43).

Marzano et al. (2005) actually found 21 responsibilities, as they call them, or behaviors or habits for leaders to improve student learning. Four are listed above, and the other 21 are included in the eight remaining sections. While these four responsibilities are important for school leaders, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) connected to Kowalski’s point above claiming that ethical and trustworthy behavior is not just an expectation but must be the rule:

Leadership is not simply a function of what a school principal, or indeed any other individual or group of leaders, knows and does. Rather, it is the activities engaged in by the leaders, in interaction with others in particular contexts around specific tasks (p. 5).

Further, they challenged future researchers to examine how school leadership happens within the school setting, including staff, students, and the community. In other words, school leadership does not happen in isolation or a vacuum but is collaborative, serving, and communal, claiming and naming this as *distributed leadership* which is composed of four main ideas from Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004):

- Leadership tasks and functions: establishing instructional vision, school culture, staff climate, and professional development; monitoring instruction; procuring and distributing resources.
- Task-enactment: how school leaders enact the tasks listed above with staff.
- Social distribution of task-enactment: the negotiated order between leaders and followers and how they work together to accomplish the tasks.
- Situational distribution of task-enactment: the situations in which these tasks are enacted is integrated into the environment of the school.

These ideas emphasize the point that leadership does not and cannot happen alone but in collaboration and consultation with the followership.

Additionally, Reed and Swaminathan (2016) supported distributed leadership because it improves student achievement and school climate, which was evidenced by their three-year case study of an urban high school principal. They found that the principal used distributed leadership, professional learning communities, and social justice leadership to improve student learning and school climate. The same was true for a cross-case study conducted by Masumoto

and Brown-Welty (2009) of distributed leadership in rural California high schools that were high-performing and yet high-poverty. The researchers interviewed school personnel and community members, analyzed documents, and observed school life. They found distributed leadership led to improved instruction by the teachers which, in turn, led to improved student achievement when compared to other rural California high schools. Formal and informal links to the staff, students, and community enhanced the impact of the distributed leadership.

Additionally, principals and other school leaders were focused on transforming the school, continuously improving it, by focusing on instruction. The blend of distributed, transformative, and instructional leadership made the difference in these three rural California high schools. It seems that this is the focus of any distributed or shared or collective leadership in schools: improving teacher instruction to improve student achievement. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), in their quantitative research based on 4,165 surveys from K-12 teachers in a sample of schools across the United States, supported this with their claim that *shared leadership* within the professional community of school certainly improved instruction and, therefore, student learning.

Similar to distributed leadership, Leithwood and Mascall (2008) researched the impact of *collective leadership* on student achievement by surveying 2,570 teachers from 90 schools across nine states. They used the term collective leadership to focus on the combined effects of all the leadership sources but also the differences each source contributes to student achievement. According to Leithwood and Mascall collective leadership was slightly different than distributed leadership because distributed leadership looked into the effectiveness of certain people carrying out certain roles within the leadership. Regardless, both collective and distributed leadership promoted a flatter organizational distribution of labor and authority rather than the more traditional hierarchical authority. Leithwood and Mascall found that this style of leadership was

more effective than the “lone man” leadership style because there was deeper reinforcement of the leadership influence throughout the functioning mission and vision of the school. However, they found that there was not much difference between what had always been a necessary feature of a school where leadership had always been shared and a more deliberate, planned distribution of leadership. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) found that student achievement increased when all staff were empowered and received collective or share leadership to actively support this student achievement.

Beard’s (2013) research supported this point by emphasizing *authentic leadership*, which was supported by her qualitative case study in which she interviewed an urban superintendent and surveyed her close followers. The superintendent was successful in school improvement. Beard (2013, p. 1022-1023) concluded that this superintendent was an effective leader because she embodied the basic principles of authentic leadership through this theoretical framework:

- Self-awareness: an understanding of self, how the individual makes meaning of the world, and how both affect him or her over time.
- Transparency: presenting one’s authentic self to others to promote trust through openness.
- Moral/Ethical Perspective: self-regulation by internal moral standards and values.
- Balanced Processing: objectively analyzing all relevant data before coming to a decision.

The superintendent that Beard interviewed and studied embodied these principles of authentic leadership, thus, promoting and accomplishing significant school improvement and ultimately, student learning. Dantley (2003) supported Beard’s findings by promoting purpose-driven leadership to improve and bring deeper meaning to student learning: “A purpose-driven leader becomes one who is focused on helping those in the learning community cope with elusive and

volatile matters while maintaining a vision and hope that transcends them” (p. 281). Dantley’s (2003) view of leadership brought the meaning of student learning into view, arguably increasing learning and student connection to that learning.

Transformational leadership is another style of leadership that is similar to those listed above, in which the leader works with followers to identify needs and creates a vision for that change, supporting it with inspiration and executing the change with the committed members of the group. Ross and Gray (2006) found that principals who adopt the transformational leadership approach or style do impact student achievement, but indirectly. Because of the principal’s encouragement, vision, and inspiration, teachers were more committed to the mission of the school, to the professional community, to teaching and believing in their own capacity to teach effectively, and to adapting to the demands of a changing culture and climate, internally and externally.

Ultimately, whether distributed, transformational, purpose-driven, or collective leadership, the literature pointed to the effectiveness of leadership that included and served others so that they ultimately could educate, nurture, and serve students in their setting with their unique needs.

Equity and cultural responsiveness. The focus of education has to be on opportunity for students and their learning. Thus, “Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote *each* student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, p. 11).

Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, and Reeves (2012) found this to be a leadership priority after interviewing seven rural superintendents. They found that school leaders needed to support each student’s success and well-being as well as the priority of “creating resources” (p. 6), which

supported learning for each student. This perspective must be rooted in the culture of the organization and really be the center of why the school exists and does what it does. Ash, Hodge, and Connell (2013) in their review of the literature on recruiting and selecting principals who increased student learning were found supporting student learning with their critical practice to “ensure student-focused vision and action” (p. 96). All actions in and around the school by staff, faculty, administration, and parents must be student-focused, creating a culture and ethic of care for those students. Dantley (2003) argued for purpose-driven leadership in schools to support these views while deepening the cause of reflective, shared, student-centered school leadership. Marzano et al. (2005) had culture as one of the 21 responsibilities:

- Culture: The school leader “fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation” (p. 42).

Clearly, this supports the effort needed from school leaders to help all students be able to learn and thrive in schools.

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment. If education is to be about student opportunity and learning, then those opportunities for learning need to be thoughtfully selected and vetted in order to be challenging and thorough. “Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote *each* student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, p. 12). Marzano et al. (2005) strongly supported this with two school leader responsibilities:

- Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment: The school leader “is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices” (p. 42).

- Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment: The school leader “is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices” (p. 43).

It is imperative that all school leaders knew about and were involved in their schools’ curriculum, instruction, and assessment, according to Nettles and Herrington (2007). Washington et al. (2007) used a qualitative, multi-site case study, interviewing the leaders and reviewing district documents to see and understand the effective practices of 30 female superintendents in Kentucky as compared to their male counterparts. Interestingly, four effective patterns emerged from the research on strong, female superintendents that support this section’s focus: (1) an instructional focus for the district; (2) professional knowledge and experience [in teaching]; (3) putting children first; (4) being a change agent [for student learning]. All four of these support the practice of school leaders being focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, which was particularly evident in the 30 female superintendents studied, who had a deep “children first” attitude and focus as they led their staff and school communities. Similar findings were found in a study of principals in three rural California high schools who shared similar leadership contributions, evidenced by improved student achievement (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). These researchers found three common reasons for school-wide success: clear and direct focus on instruction, standards, and expectations; strong teachers; and multiple support systems for student with various needs. All three of these conclusions, when following the staff at the three rural California high schools, showed the cause of increased student learning, which has been supported by other authors (Forner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2005).

Ash et al. (2013), in their critical practice, encouraged principals to “give life to data” (p. 96). They asked principals to find, focus on, and use the data from scholarly research, their schools, and the community to improve and encourage individual student learning. This

curricular and instructional knowledge and involvement are certainly rooted in content for student learning but must be central to the teacher in the classroom.

The focus of student learning should be “a high quality teacher in each classroom” (Forner et al., 2012, p. 5) that was focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment for student learning. The teacher not only directs the learning, but he or she also establishes the culture, climate, and community within the classroom as the superintendent does in the school.

Community of care and support for students. The culture and community of a school must be nurturing, challenging and helpful. The literature promoted this practice from school leaders. “Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of *each* student” (NPBEA, p. 13). Marzano et al. (2005) supported this with responsibilities that advocate for care and support of students.

- Affirmation: The school leader “recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures” (p. 42).
- Communication: The school leader “establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students” (p. 42).

Similarly, Ash et al. (2013), from their research on school principals, supported this with their standard that defines practices of effective principals: “focus on the direction” (p. 95), which refers to a need for principals to create “a culture of caring, communication, and collaboration” (p. 95). The research supported this nurturing leadership with a “children first” attitude (Dantley, 2003; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Washington et al., 2007). This is one vital area in the principal’s effort to improve student learning – nurturing and caring for students.

Professional capacity of school personnel. In order to improve the organization and, therefore, student learning, school employees must be improving and learning. According to PSEL, “Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote *each* student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, p. 14). This statement and effort was strongly supported by Marzano et al. (2005) and the four responsibilities for which they advocate:

- Monitoring/Evaluating: The school leader “monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning” (p. 43).
- Input: The school leader “involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies” (p. 42).
- Intellectual stimulation: The school leader “ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture” (p. 42).
- Resources: The school leader “provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs” (p. 43).

The reader can see the focus that the school leader brings to the professional capacity and culture of the staff. It is imperative that the staff is involved in the researching, planning and implementing and are supported with the resources they need. Ash et al. (2013) supported this but put the responsibility on the principal of the school or building in one of their five critical practices to “lead learning” (p. 97), expecting everyone in school to continuously learn and expand their own abilities.

Professional community for teachers and staff. The community of the school, its culture, and the climate must focus on the mission to promote student learning. All schools

should be focused on this, despite each school's unique mission. So, it is important that "effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being" (NPBEA, p. 15). Nettles and Herrington (2007) pushed the reader to abandon the idea that principals have a direct effect on student learning, instead pushing us "to focus on the indirect relationships that principals create through their interactions with teachers and the educational environment" (p. 729). This was an important shift in thinking and practice from the research; school leaders like principals can influence and improve student learning indirectly through the instructional staff. Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, and Mekkelsen (2004) advocated for this same point in their study on literacy improvement in Vermont schools over an eight to ten year period: effective instruction came from teachers who were committed experts, supported by committed administrators who were focused on student learning, specifically literacy in this study.

West argues that this professional community needs to start with the administrators of the school working as a leadership team, which is filled with "dynamic, collaborative, and intentional interactions" (2011, p. 12). These administrative interactions are critical but face major barriers, according to West: substandard performance, unprofessional behavior, negative attitudes, lack of trust, and poor communication skills (2011). Yet, West argued that these can be combatted by adhering to professional standards, creating workplace norms, setting team goals, and engaging in collective professional development. School administrators have to function as a team in order to establish a community that supports teachers for student learning. Importantly, this transfers directly into the teacher community.

Printy (2008) conducted research that considered school leaders' influences on teachers' learning in a community of practice, which, in this context, is a group of teachers working

together to practice the craft of teaching, helping each other improve. Principals and department chairpersons must create the opportunity for teachers to learn in such a community of practice. However, Printy's (2008) research showed that these principals were too removed from the communities of practice and that department chairpersons actually slowed the rate of instructional change. School leadership can influence and should strive to do so in more deliberate ways for the sake of student learning.

The superintendent as the leader must be willing to address staff that are low-performing, being willing to remove them (Forner, et al., 2012). Staff must “grow or go” in order to support the mission, vision, and values of the school. With the idea of removing low-performing staff in mind, it is still best to establish a team throughout the system, particularly from superintendent to building principal to teacher, for the sake of student learning.

Some authors believed this administrative team setting and format is different for rural superintendents. Forner et al. (2012) found in their study that rural superintendents have a different leadership context compared to that of the urban and suburban peers. This context was unique because of three things:

1. A rural community often defined by poverty and economic loss.
2. A rural administrator overburdened with a wide range of responsibilities.
3. A rural school leader forced to serve a uniquely public role.

These important distinctions bring more context to the work and leadership of the rural school leader.

Interestingly, Usmani (2010) examined the difference between superintendents who have followed a traditional and non-traditional employment path. From her study, *traditional* referred to leaders who moved from teacher to principal to superintendent, and *nontraditional* referred to

leaders who moved from industries outside of education, such as military or business. Usmani, surveyed 10 superintendents and then did in-depth interviews with them; five were from traditional path and five were from nontraditional paths. She found that superintendents from nontraditional leadership made change more quickly within a context of observed student growth in schools (2010). However, both the traditional and nontraditional superintendents had a common set of competencies that drove student achievement. When those competencies were exhibited, there was no clear distinction between the backgrounds of the two superintendent groups. So the importance and significance rested in the focus on common and distinctive competencies as well as personal and professional character. It is important to focus on the larger picture of all school leadership referenced at the beginning of this section, which Marzano et al. did.

Marzano et al. (2005) supported the administrative team approach for which West (2011) advocated by reinforcing rewards and relationships.

- Contingent rewards: The school leader “recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments” (p. 42).
- Relationships: The school leader “demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff” (p. 43).

The professional community of a school must be one of the primary focuses of school leaders as they serve the staff, students, and society, but this service must have a collaborative, relational basis in order to provide the most opportunity for student learning.

Meaningful engagement of families and community. As noted above, improvement, growth, and learning happen best in community. Obviously, we all have to learn but a community of learning promotes everyone’s learning, especially the students’ (Nettles &

Herrington, 2007). PSEL claims, “Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote *each* student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, p. 16). Marzano et al. (2005) supported PSEL’s claim from above with at least two of their school leader responsibilities:

- Outreach: The school leader “is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders” (p. 43).
- Visibility: The school leader “has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students” (p. 43).

Mosenthal et al. (2004) supported this from their research in many Vermont schools across the spectrum of the socio-economic status, giving evidence of an entire school community working toward a shared vision of student achievement in literacy.

Operations and management. Whether we talk about student transportation, financial planning and oversight, or answering school phones, it is vital that everything focuses on student learning. “Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote *each* student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, p. 17). School leaders advocate for funding and resources for supplies and salaries that match the district’s mission, vision, and values (Forner et al., 2012). These leaders are also aware of the culture and problems within the school as Marzano et al. (2005) claimed in this responsibility:

- Situational awareness: The school leader “is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and use this information to address current and potential problems” (p. 43).

Ash et al. (2013) supported this with one of their critical practices being to “Build a powerful organization” (p. 95), emphasizing a focus on student learning through an orderly school that is

continuously improving, including the safety and orderliness of the school (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). It is imperative that school leaders have their fingers on the pulse of the school community and culture so they can support student learning, as the above authors claim.

School improvement. Continuous improvement is essential for all organizations; schools are certainly no exception. Leaders must lead constantly for improvement, which of course involves *change*. “Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote *each* student’s academic success and well-being” (NPBEA, p. 18). Many authors supported the effort and notion of continuous improvement in schools (Ash et al., 2013; Dantley, 2003; Horine, Frazier, & Edmister, 1998; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Many schools followed some school reform or improvement system that takes an in-depth view of the entire school organization. Horine et al. (1998) researched the impact of the criteria from the Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award on 30 schools across the nation, looking at all aspects of schools, including leadership, strategic planning, human resources, business management, student learning, and overall school performance. The Baldrige Award focused on continuous quality improvement principles throughout an organization, and Horine et al. (1998) found that school leaders must use school results to drive improvement.

The contexts and situations in which leaders find themselves deeply impact how effective leaders manage their organizations and the people within them. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) described the situational leadership model as a theoretical framework that provided insight for organizational change: leaders must consider their specific followers when determining how to lead them. Specifically, they explained a leader’s task behavior and relationship behavior through their situational leadership theory. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) shared four leadership approaches depending on the follower’s abilities and commitment: telling, selling, participating,

and delegating. Ireh and Bailey (1999) explained this and presented important research from 172 out of 200 Ohio school superintendents on the application of this theory. They mailed surveys looking for the superintendents who implemented planned change and their leadership styles for implementing change. As a predominant style of leadership, 2% of the superintendents used “telling,” 42% used “selling,” and 56% used “participating,” while none used “delegating” (Ireh & Bailey, 1999). These findings provide helpful information for all school leaders showing leadership in school improvement and reform efforts.

Other research (Washington, 2007; Forner, 2012; Marzano, 2005) supported this situational leadership theory by showing how leaders consider their followers and organize their organizations. Washington et al. (2007) affirmed a feminine leadership model in their research, showing that 30 female superintendents worked from the center of a web-like organizational structure, nurturing and holding others accountable. This is in contrast to the more traditional, top-down model that is more of a male management style. Regardless of top-down or web-like, all school leaders must focus on continuous improvement for their schools. Research shows that school reform must be part of this improvement effort; there has to be a focus and method to the improvement. Forner et al. (2012) argued that the superintendent must support school reform “through direct, personal conversations” (p. 6). Superintendents and other school leaders have to talk the talk and walk the talk for school improvement and be willing to have “constructive confrontations” (p. 7) in order to support school improvement.

Powell (2018) performed a phenomenological qualitative study by interviewing 10 elementary principals who had “rich experience with conversational leadership” (p. 84-85) and were from four counties in California. Powell found that these principals were able to create conditions for school reform through specific communication strategies:

- Intimacy: valuing relationships, sharing personal stories, listening, being accessible
- Interactivity: accessibility, two-way exchanges, feedback, listening, surveying
- Inclusion: listening, equal value, contribution, collaboration, varied communication
- Intentionality: communicate objectives, review mission and goals, use norms and agendas.

These communication strategies empowered these principals to lead their schools into school reform which contribute to the literature on school improvement. The school leader must lead for improvement.

Marzano et al. (2005) supported all of the above claims by advocating for the following school leader responsibilities:

- Change agent: The school leader “is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo” (p. 42).
- Optimizer: The school leader “inspires and leads new and challenging innovations” (p. 43).

School improvement for student learning comes from the effort of creative, continuous improvement by the school leader and by everyone involved. Dantley (2003) deepened the argument on school reform by claiming that school reform around student learning did not root itself in standardized testing scores but in the unique needs, perspectives, and cultural settings of each student. This perspective has to come from the purpose-driven leader who shares his or her leadership with all involved in each child’s education.

With these habits or practices in mind, these views of leadership, specifically, the view of the public school superintendent’s work, certainly complements the literature on Christian school

superintendents. I focus next on the limited number of studies of effective practices in Christian school leadership present in the literature.

Effective Leadership Practices of Superintendents in Christian Schools

After reviewing effective practices for leaders in public schools, I now share the research on effective leadership practices for superintendents in Christian schools. Much of the literature focuses on the spiritual mission, vision, and learning in Christian schools and not at all on student curricular learning. As discussed in the research on school leadership cited above, effective leadership in public schools can have an impact on student learning (Beard, 2013; Dantley, 2003; Forner et al., 2012; Leithwood, 1995; Marzano et al., 2005; Masumoto and Brown-Welty, 2009; Mosenthal et al., 2004; Nettles, S., & Herrington, 2007; Reed and Swaminathan, 2016; and Siccone, 2012). Very little research supports this statement for Christian schools. Rather, the research points toward effective leadership in Christian schools having an impact on spiritual growth and health of the school as well as organizational stability, vision, and growth for students, families, staff, and the school community. Christian and Catholic (Appendix B) education organizations have established standards and benchmarks for effective schools; however, it is worth noting that they have not established standards or benchmarks for effective leaders within their schools.

Given the research and perspectives shared to this point which focus on school leadership in general, I used the research of the professional organizations listed in Table 1 and then used in Table 2 as the headings for sharing what the literature says about effective practices. The headings that I used above from National Policy Board for Educational Administration's standards (NPBEA) from 2015 to report on school leadership are not helpful in reviewing the literature on effective Christian school leadership because the literature does not discuss

Christian school leadership in these ways. The literature focuses on spiritual growth and leadership, school mission, and personnel as explained below.

Effective Christian school leadership practices. I now turn to the effective practices of Christian school leaders as reported in the literature. Williams (2008) interviewed nine Christian school heads and then developed a survey instrument that he distributed to over 700 private school administrators in private Christian schools in Texas. This mixed-methods research identified 19 indicators unique to the school setting that were grouped as “being” and “doing” indicators, shown in Table 2 and compared with other professional standards for educational leaders in Christian schools shown in Appendix C. In addition to the indicators found by Williams, Baldwin (2012) advocated for 28 skills necessary for leaders in private schools to survive and be sustainable, shown in Appendix C. These skills came from a broad geographic study of 31 effective school leaders within the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) using a mixed-methods approach with the Delphi method. The selected leaders responded to three rounds of open-ended survey questions with a 45% response rate, providing summary responses from 10 regions in the United States (Baldwin, 2012). Appendix C has a table comparing these results with Williams’ and Baldwin’s lists of skills. Meadows’ (2007) research supported NPBEA’s standards as well, although his research focused on private school leadership skills, focusing on private schools in general, not Christian schools. Nonetheless, Meadows’ (2007) research supported NPBEA’s skills after utilizing a three-round Delphi technique to identify 19 experts who identified 23 leadership skills that had the greatest impact on the future leadership of private school leaders. The lists in the literature of indicators, actions, and habits are extensive and frequent; however, NPBEA brings them together in an assimilated,

organized, and applicable list that summarizes the research well (see Appendix B). However, this is the extent of the research that corresponds with NPBEA's skills.

Overall, one significant difference that I noticed is the focus on competencies in the skills and profession from NPBEA's standards versus a more personal focus on individual qualities and abilities in the specific leader as noted by Williams (2008). Noticeably absent are any skills or practices that focus on curriculum and instruction. This literature takes the focus off of curriculum and instruction and places it primarily on mission and vision as well as ethics and professional norms of the leaders in Christian schools.

Some research (Rough, 2008; Vaught, 2010) focused on specific areas of effective Christian school leadership, such as mission statements, student enrollment, and relationships. Rough (2008) completed a study that focused on mission statements, their components, and how CEOs, or heads of school, puts the mission statement into practice. He interviewed 33 CEOs from Christian schools in all 11 regions of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). He found that each school's CEO used the mission statement to motivate and direct the school community, staff, and himself or herself. These statements were meaningful and active, enhancing the effectiveness of the school and its leader. Vaught (2010) added to this by finding schools that had increasing enrollment had leaders who were personally, directly, and proactively involved in their approach to enrollment, showing the leaders' commitment to the mission of the school. He found this through a mixed- methods approach surveying and interviewing 52 leaders from four regions of ACSI.

In another study of Christian school leadership, Carman (2009) researched the impact of diversity, referring to age, tenure, functional background, education, socioeconomic roots and financial position, in school leadership as well as leadership characteristics that focused on

student learning by interviewing and surveying board members, top administrative leadership team, faculty, and the pastoral staff at a Christian school in the Midwest. Diversity in age, tenure, background, education, socioeconomic roots, and leadership are important and impactful. The characteristics that Carman (2009) referred to are very similar to the characteristics listed in Table 2, which does not reveal anything new because they are desired common characteristics: communication and listening, experience, faith in Christ, passion for the mission, person of character, servant attitude, and team-oriented. However, Carman's study on diversity in leadership did support some areas where diversity would be important to consider in school leadership, while affirming that any "diversity should complement and strengthen the mission rather than undermine it" (2009, p. 62). In this setting, diversity brought an increased perspective and grew the clientele (those enrolled in the school). Interestingly, Carman's (2009) research placed the following above diversity: God's sovereignty in hiring (p. 124) and hiring the best regardless of diversity (p. 124).

Fine, Gordon, and Israel (2008) added to this finding in their study of a university educational leadership model that prepared nontraditional Jewish day school leaders who traditionally rose from the ranks of the teaching staff. This supported and contradicted the notion of hiring the best regardless of diversity. Fine et al. (2008) shared that while many of the Jewish day school leaders fit well within the culture of their schools, they were often unprepared to lead in those schools. To solve this problem, the Jewish day schools partnered with another agency and a university to train these leaders from within; this helped solidify the leadership appointment. I mention all of these characteristics and diversity in leadership to deepen our understanding of Christian school leadership as well as the importance of diversity; however, the

desire of faith-based schools to have leaders from within their faith is strong, regardless of qualifications.

Williams's (2008) research from nine qualitative interviews with heads of school or heads of buildings as well as the quantitative surveys distributed to 170 accredited, private, Christian school systems resulted in 19 indicators of engaging leadership divided into two categories of indicators: "being" indicators and "doing" indicators, which are further divided into two more areas as seen in Table 2. Williams's (2008) depth of research across many Christian schools in Texas as well as the distinction he makes between effective leadership and engaging leadership was a significant distinction: "*engaging leadership* will be defined as that quality in individuals which allows them to connect with and direct others effectively and successfully" (Williams, 2008, p. 9). Whereas, *effective leadership* has been defined in summary as "exceptional achievement."

Table 2

Williams 19 Indicators of Engaging Leadership

19 Indicators of Engaging Leadership			
<u>"Doing" Indicators</u>		<u>"Being" Indicators</u>	
Spiritual Leader	Strong Work Ethic	Emotional Intelligence for Others	Emotional Intelligence for Self
Discernment	High Expectations	Flexibility	Life Learner
Role Model	Visionary	Influencer	Creativity
Counselor	Visible	Compassionate	Natural in the Position
		Community Builder	Positive Attitude

While many of these indicators are similar to or could be partnered with the professional standards for educational leaders from Table 1, the "spiritual leader" indicator shows a distinct difference between the two because of the faith-based focus. Kowalski (2006) addressed the

difference between the personal and professional leadership practices in his “personal leadership characteristics” and his “professional skills” explained earlier and listed in Table 1. This is similar to Williams’ (2008) view because of the distinction between leaders’ personal characteristics or “being” indicators and professional skills or “doing” indicators; however, the comparison breaks down because the spiritual leader indicator is part of the “doing” or “professional skills” side of the indicators yet it is actually part of the “being” or “personal leadership characteristics” as well.

Investing in future leaders by training those leaders is also a central topic in the literature. Stueber (2000b) advocated for training that prepares principals to be effective leaders in Lutheran schools. He focused on Lutheran principals knowing, understanding, and acting on three types of characteristics: visionary leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership. In a related study, Wallace, Ridenour, and Biddle (1999) studied the adequacy of the formal leadership training for lay Catholic high school principals. Three hundred and twenty-four principals from 43 states responded to the survey to determine school profile, personal profile, personal perspective on faith-based leadership training, and interest in being interviewed. A strong, diverse representative group was interviewed using purposeful sampling; however, the authors did not provide the number of interviewees. They determined three important responsibilities for lay Catholic high school principals from their survey information as well as the principals’ responses:

1. Being a personal faith model to the faculty and students.
2. Providing meaningful opportunities for both faculty and students to develop their own faith.

3. Providing leadership in building a faith community and strengthening the Catholic identity of the school.

These all pointed to the significance of the Catholic faith to these lay high school principals for the mission of their schools. Seventy percent believed that their schools were successful in delivering the distinctive Catholic mission; however, 70% claimed that their formal preparation to be a faith leader was inadequate. This presents an interesting dichotomy: Catholic high schools are fulfilling their mission, but the leaders of those Catholic high schools have not received adequate training to be a faith leader. Holter and Frabutt (2012) supported this with more recommendations to improve the training for Catholic school leaders. They advocated for a mission-driven and data-informed leadership from the Catholic school leaders. This focus would come from training Catholic principals in action research where they perform systematic inquiry in order to address challenges within their realm of leadership. Holter and Frabutt (2012) made this claim, “Action research represents an orientation to Catholic school leadership that is shaped by the Catholic faith, supported by community, and strengthened through the use of sound data to bring about positive change” (p.265). Action research is an essential tool for training and leading as principals.

In support of this claim, Boyle, Haller, and Hunt (2016) presented a “crosswalk” between the National Standards for Effective Catholic Schools (NSBECS) and the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders in order to provide indicators for leaders across all standards. This is an area that is lacking in the literature; there are no Christian or Catholic school standards for effective leadership; however, Ozar and Weitzel-O’Neill pointed readers to use them to guide Catholic school leaders, administrators and board

members, in their governance and their leadership (2013). Table 3 shows the indicators to which Boyle et al. are referring.

Table 3

Examples of Indicators across All Standards – Boyle et al. (2016):

Examples of Indicators across All Standards

Mission and Catholic Identity:

- Collaboratively develops and implements a shared vision and mission;
- Collects and uses data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning;
- Creates and implements plans to achieve goals;
- Promotes continuous and sustainable improvement;
- Monitors and evaluates progress and revise plans.

Governance and Leadership:

- Collaborative effort and decision-making focused on shared responsibility for school and student success;
- Engages stakeholders around improvements efforts aligned to the school's mission and vision and focused on results.

Academic Excellence:

- Focuses on improved teaching and learning through a rigorous curriculum;
- Creates a culture of high expectations that provides supports for all students; implementation of a continuous improvement process with clear feedback loops
- Aligns school improvement efforts with the school's mission and vision;
- Coordinates the work of multiple stakeholders focused on school improvement efforts.

Operational Vitality:

- Aligns all resources toward the school's mission and vision;
- Ensures compliance with all educational requirements and accountable for school and student outcomes;
- Allocates resources to maintain facilities, ensure a safe, clean and effective learning environment;

These examples challenge schools and scholars to consider standards and indicators for effective Christian school leadership, pushing them to consider better leadership training for new leaders as well as determining the most effective leadership practices to be standardized.

Types of effective leadership in faith-based schools. A school leader's view on life, others, and spirituality is going to shape their leadership, their view on education, and their values. Leadership is a spiritual and moral practice in life (Sergiovanni, 1992). Striepe, Clarke, and O'Donoghue (2014) supported this in their research on the factors that shape the leaders in faith-based schools. They performed a multiple case study with three schools of different religious faiths in Western Australia, interviewing members of the leadership teams from each of the schools as well as analyzing documents and observing school life. This research showed how the participants' understanding of educational leadership was deeply shaped by their values and morality which guided their practices. The themes from the research by Striepe et al. (2014) were as follows:

- Understandings of leadership are value-driven.
- Practices of leadership are guided by values.
- Perspectives on leadership are ultimately shaped by the leader's personal philosophy or spirituality and are enhanced by the ethos of the school's affiliated faith.

Understandably, all leaders are influenced by their views on life, values, spirituality, and morality.

Taking this point deeper, much of the research showed that leaders in Christian schools focus on the spiritual health, growth, and vision in their schools rather than teacher professional development, student learning, and curriculum (Banke, Maldonado, & Lacey, 2012; Schuttloffel, 2013). Schuttloffel (2013) found three themes from her study on Catholic educational leadership: the impact of their personal life story within Catholicism; their view of leadership as a vocation within an education ministry; and the priority given to relationships (p. 81, 88). These themes were evidence of Catholic educational leaders' contemplative practice where they reflect on their thinking and their leadership in order to lead more effectively and enhance school culture. Schuttloffel performed her hermeneutical phenomenological qualitative study in Catholic schools in Australia, England, and the Netherlands by interviewing school staff, board members, diocesan officials, and higher education researchers from at least 10 schools in each nation.

Cole (2016) supported effective leadership in faith-based schools with her research, showing that moral attentiveness and resilience together predicted exemplary school leadership. She determined this by surveying 47 leaders from schools who were members of the International Christian Accrediting Association (ICAA). She used three self-assessment surveys: the *Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)*, the *Moral Attentiveness Scale (MAS)*, and the *Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)*; all of which were used to measure the impact of moral awareness and resilience on the ability of a leader to provide exemplary leadership in a school, which they found to be true. For Christian school leaders, a person's spirituality, morality, and resilience cannot be compartmentalized but must be used throughout their leading and entire being; it can't be separated!

Baldwin (2012), based on her findings from research on the skills necessary to lead and sustain K-12 Christian schools, made the point that Christian schools must integrate spiritual truths and principles throughout every aspect of the organization. This is the responsibility of the effective Christian school leader with his or her staff. Baldwin stated that 31 private K-12 school chief administrators from ACSI schools with student populations of 500 or more reported 28 skills listed in Appendix B “for today’s success and tomorrow’s sustainability for the leaders of the private school” (2012, p. iv). These skills correlate with the standards listed, showing themes across the research.

Transactional, transformational, and servant leadership. Harrison and Allen (2017) used a qualitative exploratory study with a focus group of six Christian school administrators from Christian schools in the Pacific Northwest. They found that these administrators were committed “to Christian faith values, the development of spirituality as a goal for their students, and a strong desire to serve their school communities.” Overall, they desired to follow God’s calling into leadership, helping others grow, and serving others; this is servant leadership. Council and Cooper (2011) created their own 16 item survey, *The Classical and Christian Headmasters’ Exploration (CACHE)*, to gain demographic information including training, background, and relationships with members of the school community, attitudes and beliefs about Christian tenets and classical education pedagogy, perceptions of leadership style, job satisfaction and efficacy, and career aspirations. They found that these classical Christian school administrators used servant leadership as their predominant style with transformational slightly below that and transactional leadership as the lowest of the three. The strong identification to servant and transformational leadership came from their strong commitment to their Christian values and the shared values of the organizations in which they served. For clarification and

depth on servant leadership, Stueber (2000a) surveyed Lutheran high school principals on these ten servant leadership characteristics: foresight, commitment to the growth of people, conceptualization, persuasion, listening, empathy, awareness, building community, stewardship, and healing. The principals scored 8.39 on self-evaluation and 8.12 or higher (on a 10-point scale with 10 being the highest) by others who knew them well on a servant leadership survey in each of these characteristics supporting servant leadership as an effective approach to leadership. Harrison and Allen's (2017) research showed that any overt focus on student learning and professional development for teachers to increase the student learning was missing; there was little reference to it at all. Harrison and Allen (2017) encouraged Christian school leaders to more deeply consider professional development to enhance student learning.

Banke et al. (2012) certainly affirmed and dealt with the impact and responsibility of servant leadership in their research with 12 Christian school leaders. While the focus of this phenomenological study was on spirituality, the research was rooted in Greenleaf's servant leadership theory. They interviewed this purposeful, nominated group for their phenomenological study in order "to examine the spiritual preparation programs and experiences Christian school leaders have undertaken to become the spiritual leaders of their schools" (Banke et al., 2012, p. 240). They found several spiritual experiences to be influential on their leadership in schools: family, college, and church. They also found several spiritual meanings, programs, and stories to be influential on their leadership in schools including the Bible and prayer. Leaders learned about their purpose, calling, and meaning from these experiences and programs, pointing them to the life of leadership and service to God and others in Christian education. This research focused heavily on the spiritual leadership and none on the educational. Interestingly, Fadare (2016) disputed Banke et al. for their definition of Christian leader and leadership, and their

treatment of spiritual and servant leadership, claiming they used these terms as synonyms.

Fadare also questioned the methodology of their study and had concerns with their sampled selections. These concerns and the overall dispute around Christian school leaders and spiritual leaders are worth noting, yet need resolving. Resolution comes by way of recognizing the significant need for Christian school leaders to also have spiritual leadership attributes, character, and belief.

Black's (2010) study found that the presence of servant leadership in Catholic elementary schools supported a positive school climate which in turn improved student achievement. Black's mixed-method study was performed in Catholic elementary schools in Ontario, Canada. Using qualitative instruments, Black distributed surveys to 231 full-time teachers and 15 principals, analyzed the data and then conducted focus group interviews with 10% of the above sample. Again, the correlation between servant leadership and school climate was positive contributing to the understanding of effective school leadership practices.

While slightly different than servant leadership, pastoral leadership has deep similarities. Ferguson (2018) shared what his research revealed when studying pastoral leadership from heads of evangelical Christian schools. This qualitative research was performed through a collective case study with three cases, interviewing heads of school and multiple constituents in three different areas of the United States. Ferguson found that these heads of school enriched the culture and community of their schools, improved student outcomes, and enhanced the Christian ethos of their schools by exercising pastoral leadership. They exercised this style of leadership in order to "communicate care and concern" (p. 88), "to build healthy school cultures" (p. 91), and "to avoid mission drift" (p. 94). Pastoral leadership is similar to servant leadership, and it represents another leadership style used by Christian school superintendents.

The literature on effective practices of Christian school leaders is certainly present but lacks the breadth and depth that I found for school leaders in general in the earlier part of the literature review. This indicates the need to ask my research question: What are the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents associated with growth and improvement in CSI schools operations and student learning? From an extensive review of the literature, it appears that this research has not been done on CSI schools in the United States or Canada.

Analytical Theory

I selected three theories to create a framework for understanding effective leadership practices by successful superintendents in schools that have membership in Christian Schools International. First, I selected Covey's (1991, p. 18) work on principles and habits, using seven habits as well as his eighth habit of highly effective people to live out the "inviolable principles" that are natural laws in our human dimension. Covey (2004a, 2004b) presented compelling visions of effective leadership whether for business, non-profit organizations, or family through his seven habits (2004a) and his eighth habit (2004b), which I will refer to together as his eight habits. Covey's eight habits serve as the overarching framework for my study because of their summative view of effective leadership habits or practices, supporting unchanging principles of living.

The following theories give a framework to explain the motive and outcome of Covey's effective practices – why do effective leaders act the way they do? The second theory, servant leadership, comes under the broader heading of ethical leadership and its five principles for leaders: respect others, serve others, show justice, manifest honesty, and build community (Northouse, 2010). Ethical leadership considers values, conduct, and character at its center. Servant leadership puts the well-being of others in the organization first by having the leader

serve them. While ethical leadership provides a broader heading, I focus on servant leadership because it is referenced and supported in the literature on leadership and is more specific in its characteristics.

The next theory, transformational leadership theory, supports Covey's effective practices. Transformational leadership has charismatic and affective elements that transform people, changing them and what they do, especially the followers. The followers in transformational leadership accomplish more than what is expected of them. All involved are inspired and empowered in times of uncertainty, and followers and leaders are inextricably bound in the transformational leadership process thus transforming everyone including the organization itself.

Covey's Habits for Effective Leadership

Covey's (2004a, 2004b) eight habits of highly effective people provides a clear direction on effective living and leadership. Upon studying many other leadership authors who lead the way for effective leadership practices, I argue that Covey's eight habits are a thorough culmination of the theories and work of all of these authors: Collins (2001), Kouzes and Posner (2012), Duhigg (2012), Sinek (2009), Lencioni (2012), Rath and Conchie (2008). Without Covey's writing and research, we lack a complete view of effective leadership practices. The table in Appendix D summarizes, synthesizes, and connects effective leadership practices, often referred to as habits, across the leadership author spectrum.

Covey (2004a) presented a compelling argument of three overlapping circles of knowledge, skills, and desire, but the area where these three circles overlap was our habits – our “internalized principles and patterns of behavior” (p. 48). These habits with their supporting knowledge, skills, and desire, guide our living and leading. Habits promote “organizational health” as Lencioni (2012) claimed: “An organization has *integrity* – is healthy – when it is

whole, consistent, and complete, that is, when its management, operations, strategy, and culture fit together and make sense” (p. 5). These habits and organizational health are in a loop where one creates the other, cyclically.

Habits of any type, whether personal or in leadership, however, are a curious thing and certainly require some attention and understanding in order to more fully understand the power of our leadership habits, effective or not. Duhigg (2012) described the habit loop – cue – routine – reward, which was motivated by cravings. This loop explains our habits. We experience some sort of cue, then we jump into our routine, and we experience the reward. Our craving for that experience is then satisfied. We have to understand habits, how and why they form and continue, as well as how to change them when necessary in our lives, in our organizations, or in our communities. Covey and the other cited authors advocated for these habits of effective people.

Be proactive. Covey (2004a) began his habit promotion with “Be Proactive.” Covey said, “We are responsible for our own lives. Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. We have the initiative and the responsibility to make things happen” (p. 71). The opposite of being proactive is being reactive – reacting to the environment rather than influencing even controlling the environment. In this point, Covey puts the response-burden on us not on what is done to us: “It’s not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us that hurts us” (p. 73). Covey illustrated this with his circle of concern with a concentric circle inside it as the circle of influence. He argued that the more we exercise our circle of influence, the closer we get to the edge of our circle of concern. Our responsibility is to focus on these things of concern.

Being proactive is a choice, and Covey encouraged people to make this their first habit. Several other authors made similar claims particularly as it related to leaders. Collins’ (2001)

now famous explanation of level five leaders supported Covey's point by describing effective, great leaders, who were "modest and willful, humble and fearless" (p. 22). This type of leadership is proactive, certainly, but it is also humble and careful, avoiding bullish, egotistical attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, Kouzes and Posner (2012) pushed for this: "Proactivity consistently produces better results than reactivity or inactivity" (p. 164). Being proactive requires us to focus on our strengths as an individual, as a team, and as an organization, which Rath and Conchie (2008) explained in a similar way to Covey's proactive leadership.

Begin with the end in mind. Covey (2004a) pointed us personally and professionally toward taking the long view of leadership. "Begin with the end in mind" focuses the readers on where we want a particular project, a business plan, our personal lives, or our entire organization to be. Without this intentional focus, we can become trapped in a reactive, not proactive, loop. Leadership is having this long vision while management is taking care of daily operations. Covey quoted Drucker and Bennis, "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things" (2004, p. 101). This notion points us to the two creations leaders are responsible for: leadership then management.

Leadership must be first and management second. "Be proactive," Covey's first habit, establishes leaders as creators, and the second habit is the first creation, focusing on the mission and vision of the life, family, and organization. In summary, Covey (2004a) claimed, "Whatever is at the center of our life will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom, and power" (p. 109). So when our lives are led or centered on the end, on deep and meaningful principles, we then can focus on effective leadership. If we are centered on other things like family, wealth, success, or our church, we will lose sight of the "end." This end or these ends can be equated to principles; "principles are deep, fundamental truths, classic truths, generic common

denominators” (Covey, 2004a, p. 122). These principles then allow us to lead from a stable place that is not governed by pliable, changing things.

So we must imagine or visualize the “end” in order to stay principle-centered. We have to think broadly and deeply enough in order to see above the details of a situation or role in our lives. Many other authors affirm Covey’s habit of beginning with the end in mind. In order to see this end, Kouzes and Posner (2012) argued that leaders must imagine the possibilities, find a common purpose, and clarify values in order to lead effectively, which Collins (2001) in *Good to Great* advocated for in several of his points, such as Level 5 Leadership and the Hedgehog Concept, which both focused on the end goal. Lencioni added to Covey’s and Collin’s point about having an intentional focus for the organization for everyone running it by advocating for a cohesive leadership team. Sinek (2009) argued for “WHY.” He claimed that few organizations can answer why they do what they do and therefore have difficulties in accomplishing what they are supposed to do. “We say WHAT we do, we sometimes say HOW we do it, but we rarely say WHY we do WHAT we do” (Sinek, 2009, p. 39). We do not have the vision or purpose of our organization in clear sight. According to Sinek (2009), organizations struggle, flounder, and even fail “when WHY goes fuzzy” (p. 175) and “split happens” (p. 183) or when an organization grows so much that the WHY gets diluted. Everyone in the organization needs to know the mission, the WHY.

Put first things first. Covey’s (2004a) third habit focused on management; however, this habit was rooted in being proactive (Habit 1) and focusing on principles, values, or “the end” (Habit 2). These first two habits of leadership build the foundation for being able to “put first things first” in management. Covey (2004a) made a clear and necessary distinction between leadership and management, both of which are necessary: “Leadership is primarily a high-

powered, right brain activity. It's more of an art; it's based on philosophy" (p. 147). This was Sinek's (2009) WHY; knowing WHY gives clarity to leaders for followers. Whereas Covey later posed the point that management is a left brain activity, arguing that it is essential to "manage from the left; lead from the right" (p. 147). Management must focus on the "discipline of HOW" things are done and the "consistency of WHAT" gets done (Sinek, 2009, pp. 66-67).

Management has to follow leadership which allows leaders to "organize and execute around priorities" (Covey, 2004a, p. 149).

With the above habits, Covey moved from private victories to public victories, from dependence to independence to interdependence. This move brings managers into an independent space preparing them for interdependence with others. Covey, with Lencioni, based his argument on relationships; leaders must build and have trusting relationships with their followership. Covey (2004a) encouraged leaders to build the "Emotional Bank Account" (p. 190), by understanding individuals, attending to the little things, keeping commitments, clarifying expectations, showing personal integrity, and apologizing sincerely when we make withdrawals. All of these things support a leadership that is rooted in interdependence with followers, which the next three habits address.

Think win/win. Covey started the journey into interdependence with others by advocating for a win/win paradigm that is mutually beneficial for everyone. "Win/Win is not a technique; it's a total philosophy of human interaction" (Covey, 2004a, p. 206). Covey went on to describe four other paradigms of interaction, advocating for adopting the "win/win or no deal" philosophy: Win/Lose, Lose/Win, Lose/Lose, or Win. However, these philosophies are flawed. He believed leaders have to adopt the "win/win or no deal" philosophy in order to support those people with whom we are interdependent. Sinek (2009) deepened the understanding of Covey's

win/win by explaining the Law of Diffusion of Innovations, which was described by Rodgers (2003) in his book *Diffusion of Innovations*. We need to see how followers respond to change in order to help realize the win/win or no deal. Sinek's point in teaching us about change was to explain how these "wins" happen: new ideas are brought about by innovators and the early adopters do just that; however, leaders need the early majority to join before the idea gets to the tipping point where there is enough support or buy-in to have the idea succeed and grow. The Law of Diffusion explains how win/wins can happen; they must have the support of the majority who must be considered in order for the new idea to work. The next two habits more deeply enable leaders to live out the win/win or no deal philosophy.

Seek first to understand, then to be understood. A major part of diagnosing problems and ultimately proposing solutions is listening, is understanding the other person's point of view, followed by explaining. Covey promoted this with his 5th habit, which had the underlying premise that this was the way to effectively lead (2004a). There is a delicate balance between understanding and being understood. Argyris and Schon (1978) actually promoted this in a similar way with advocacy and inquiry. Advocacy, like being understood, is when people state their case or make their point, but inquiry, like understanding, is about asking questions in order to understand other's advocacy. Argyris and Schon's argument was compelling and supportive of Covey's point, as was Kouzes and Posner's (2012): "The best leaders are great listeners" (p. 118).

Empathetic listening gives individuals the ability to understand what the other person is saying, thinking, and feeling. This type of listening embraces the meaning and the emotion of the issue at hand for the speaker. In this 5th Habit, it is our job to ask and listen and feel. Then things begin to change according to Covey (2004a): "As you authentically seek to understand, as you

rephrase content and reflect feeling, you give him [the other] psychological air. You also help him work through his own thoughts and feelings” (p. 249). We then can move forward within the habit to being understood, but not until then. Covey argued that being understood was the other half of Habit Five and was critical for reaching win/win solutions. Understanding then being understood is the thrust of the interdependence required to navigate through differences. This interdependence within the organization then provides the opportunity to arrive at creative solutions and third alternatives, which then creates opportunities for synergy.

Synergize. The sixth habit, to synergize, according to Covey (2004a), was all of the first five habits coming together. This is the miracle of synergy – allowing the union of people or things in an effort to create something better than they would be able to alone, with everyone contributing through their individual strengths, as Rath and Conchie (2008) claimed. If leaders are operating in areas of strength, they generate a synergy. As an aside from Rath and Conchie, this is true for individuals and teams; leaders need to be operating within their strengths not outside of them. Leaders must know their team members’ strengths in order to bring cohesion to the group and then synergy from their efforts.

Covey (2004a) encouraged synergistic communication. Lencioni (2012) promoted this also through his expectation of clarity. Clarity within leadership creates synergy. Sinek (2009) started with WHY, goes to HOW, and ends with WHAT (p. 137). He claimed that leaders have to know why they are doing what they are doing, then they think and plan how they are going to do it, in order to determine what they are going to do. WHY has to be at the center in order to create the synergy Covey is promoting.

The problem that synergy (and clarity) often faces is the fact that individuals or groups often adhere to their own idea, plan, or action. This creates a tension when two opposing ideas

are present, whether in a marriage, an organization, or between two countries; however, Covey (2004a) argued for a third alternative or way, pursuing a win/win. This then allows for both parties to pursue a synergistic way that is better than their way or a compromised way. A third or middle way comes to be because of the synergy that comes from the tension and the communication that follows. Something better for everyone is produced.

Sharpen the saw. The seventh habit encircles the earlier six habits. This sharpening of the saw encouraged people and organizations to be engaged in personal, balanced renewal (Covey, 2004a). This renewal needs to be physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional, but as Sinek (2009) argued, it also has to be rooted in WHY. We need to have this habit surrounding and running through our lives in order to stay healthy, renewed, and productive for a reason. Sharpening the saw is proactive; it cannot be reactive, and it works best when all four dimensions function in a wise and balanced way. Covey (2004a) claimed, “To neglect any one area negatively impacts the rest” (p. 302). Additionally, he translated this into organizations, not just individuals; organizations need to “sharpen their saws” as well in order to remain healthy and effective. Whether personally or with a group, this habit of renewal creates a synergy that improves effectiveness of these habits and therefore the renewal participants.

Find your voice; inspire others to find their voice. Covey wrote a second book on effective habits called *The 8th Habit* (2004b). He set up an interesting and compelling argument explaining why people lack their own voice in the 21st century. The problem in the paradigm is that people are seen as commodities or things to get something accomplished instead of seeing them as a “whole person.” Seeing people as things comes from the industrialization of society; however, in this post-industrialized society, most people have access to information and knowledge giving them the ability and responsibility to manage themselves. Covey (2004b)

claimed, “We live in a Knowledge Worker Age but operate our organizations in a controlling Industrial Age model that absolutely suppresses the release of human potential” (p. 15). We are often seen as things instead of whole people, keeping people in their Industrial Age status. Sinek’s (2009) claimed that we have lost the reason that we do things – our WHY – helps make sense of this problem. We need a paradigm shift that empowers us to find our voice and inspire others to find their voice – for everyone to know WHY. Kouzes and Posner (2012) supported helping others find their voice by giving ideas to leaders for this: expect the best in people, give regular feedback, say thank you, recognize accomplishments, and provide incentives (pp 285-296). Additionally, they recommended, in order to increase our effectiveness in helping them find voice, to get close to people (p. 287). These things help others find their voice by affirming them in their work and assuring them that they are doing the right things well. Kouzes and Posner (2012) then expanded this voice-finding endeavor into human leadership, considering all people: “Leadership is everyone’s business” (p. 331). We are all responsible for the success of the organization, and Covey pushes the reader to consider people in a different way.

Covey advocated for a whole-person paradigm: “Human beings are not *things* needing to be motivated and controlled; they are four dimensional – body, mind, heart, and spirit (2004b, p. 21). This view moves us from being one dimensional to four dimensional beings, giving us the opportunity to discover our gifts, the power to choose, and the authority to lead our own lives. This gives us voice – through our body/discipline, mind/vision, heart/passion, and spirit/conscience (Covey, 2004b, p. 114). These four areas make up our whole person. From there, Covey empowered the reader to use their own voice in order to help others find theirs. He provided a convicting model for leadership within this paradigm that makes this 8th habit the “sweet spot” within three concentric circles of personal, leadership, and organizational greatness

(Covey, 2004b, p. 280). These eight habits were the framework through which I reviewed the data from the eight interviews with school leaders.

Servant Leadership Theory

Robert Greenleaf spent the first 40 years of his career in corporate leadership at AT&T. After retiring, he began his second career for 25 years, defining, clarifying, and promoting servant leadership by writing, lecturing, and consulting. Greenleaf (2002) conceptualized the idea of servant leadership as a way of life after reading *Journey to the East* by Hesse (1956). In this story, Leo, who is the servant to the journeying party, sustains the group with his work, song, and spirit. At one point Leo disappears and the group falls into chaos and the journey is ceased. Later, Leo was found to be the head or the leader of the group that sponsored the journey. This characterizes and personifies a great leader being a servant first.

From here, Greenleaf (2002) established his underlying assumptions, premises, and arguments in order to give readers a greater understanding of servant leadership. Greenleaf supported the notion of serving and leading together, but argued that both of these concepts were largely intuitive concepts, not concrete. However, Greenleaf (2002) claimed that “it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*” (p. 27), but all things begin with the initiative of an individual and not groups. To serve first, leaders must listen, accept, and empathize in order to build strength in others as well as cast vision and have foresight as the leader. This can build consensual trust. The servant leader must also be aware and perceptive, bringing persuasiveness to individuals or the group through accurate and singular action. Nonetheless, this requires the talent of conceptualizing. Greenleaf (2002) provided significant implications that will come from servant leadership if implemented, stating that servant leaders

must create more and better order over chaos or other leaders will. We can't have a better society if there are not better people there to serve and lead in it.

Going beyond the individual, Greenleaf (2002) argued that institutions must also put people first if they are going to serve people and society. Interestingly, he claimed that we have to care for the institution as though it were a person so the institution can care for people, serving them. However, institutions are good but not great, broken in their underperformance, and the trustees need to take the lead on their improvement in order to better serve the population (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 68). Creating this servant organization creates a structure that brings flourishing, growth, and excellence.

Institutions and individuals must have the heart and mind for service based on their values and love for others. Russel (2001) claimed that a leader's personal values influence him or her to create their own essence of leadership, which is essentially servant leadership. The values supporting servant leadership are service to others, humility, integrity, honesty, and hard work (Russel, 2001, p. 77). These values point the reader toward a selfless serving posture for leadership. Wilkes explained the life of servant leaders: "Servant leaders give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others" (1996, p. 15).

Parris and Peachey (2013) performed a systematic literature review (SLR) on servant leadership. They contributed to the development and substantiation of servant leadership as a theory, but they also found the following, which demonstrated the theory's infancy, as well as its need for growth and testing:

- There is no consensus on the definition of servant leadership (p. 377).
- Servant leadership theory is being investigated across a variety of contexts, cultures and themes (p. 377).

- Researchers are using multiple measures to explore servant leadership (p. 377).
- Servant leadership is a viable leadership theory that helps organizations and improves the well-being of followers (p. 377).

While the list above shows the need for more maturing of servant leadership as a theory, Table 4 gives the breadth and depth of research and definition by many authors and scholars on the topic.

Table 4

Attributes of servant leadership from 7 major authors/scholars (information cited in Parris & Peachey, 2013, table designed by author)

Spears	Russell and Stone		Barbuto and Wheeler	Van Dierendonck	Patterson
Listening	Functional attributes	Accompanying attributes	Altruistic calling	Empowering and developing people	Agapo Love
Empathy	Vision	Communication	Emotional healing	Humility	Humility
Healing	Honesty	Credibility	Persuasive mapping	Authenticity	Altruism
Awareness	Integrity	Competence	Wisdom	Interpersonal acceptance	Vision
Persuasion	Trust	Stewardship	Org. Stewardship	Providing direction	Trust
Conceptualization	Service	Visibility		Stewardship	Service
Foresight	Modeling	Influence			Empowerment
Stewardship	Pioneering	Persuasion			
Commitment to the growth of people	Appreciation of others	Listening			
Building community	Empowerment	Encouragement			
		Teaching			
		Delegation			

Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) researched and explained the difference between transformational and servant leadership, claiming that transformational leadership tends to be more organizationally focused and servant leadership tends to be more people focused. The attributes listed in Table 4 above show the people focus while these four attributes constitute transformational leadership: idealized (charismatic) influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Stone et al., 2004). Through this work, Stone et al. (2004) connected the servant leadership theory well to the next section on transformational leadership theory and its opposite, transactional leadership theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory

The third theoretical framework that I will be using is transformational leadership. To add to the readers' understanding of transformational leadership, I am including some description of transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership, which represent quite different leadership from transformational leadership. Northouse (2010) provided helpful context and information to explain the transformational leadership theory, stating that it has charismatic and affective elements that transform people, changing them and what they do. The followers in transformational leadership accomplish more than what is expected of them. All involved are inspired and empowered in times of uncertainty, and followers and leaders are inextricably bound in the transformational leadership process.

James Downton (1973) coined the term *transformational leadership*, but Burns developed transformational leadership in his book *Leadership* (1978). He explained the difference between transactional and transformational leadership, where transactional leadership centered on exchanges that occur and transformational leadership centered on the vision and charisma of the leader, but both the leader and the follower were changed/improved through the

common relationship around the vision. House's theory on charismatic leadership focused on the charisma of the leader (as cited in Northouse, 2010). Transformational and charismatic leadership are presented as synonymous in the literature. From transformational leadership to transactional leadership, the continuum concludes with laissez-faire leadership where the leader essentially lets everything go in a hands-off approach.

Bass (1985) furthered the evolution of transformational leadership theory by giving more attention to the followers' needs and leadership charisma as well as establishing the leadership factors in Table 5, which I explain below. I include all three leadership factors in order to deepen the explanation of transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1993) also deepened the understanding of transformational leadership and organizational culture by showing the deep connection, influencing each other. The vision and culture of an organization are set by the leader but are deeply influenced by the culture; reciprocally, culture affects leadership and his or her vision for the organization, which becomes an ever-evolving process of change and improvement.

Table 5 (Northouse, p. 177, 2010)

Leadership Factors

Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership	Laissez-Faire Leadership
Factor 1: Idealized Influence	Factor 5: Contingent Reward Constructive Transactions	Factor 7: Laissez-faire Nontransactional
Factor 2: Inspirational Motivation	Factor 6: Management-by- exception: active and passive with corrective transactions	
Factor 3: Intellectual Stimulation		
Factor 4: Individualized Consideration		

Transformational leadership factors are described as follows (Northouse, 2010):

- Idealized influence: The leader has charisma, exhibits moral and ethical conduct, is trusted, and gives vision and a strong sense of mission.
- Inspirational motivation: The leader has high expectations through shared vision, uses symbols and emotional appeals, and is an inspiration to followers.
- Intellectual Stimulation: The leader challenges beliefs and values of all involved, is creative and innovative, and finds new approaches and ways of doing things.
- Individualized Consideration: The leader listens to the individual needs of followers and coaches and advises followers.

Transactional leadership factors focus on the leaders' exchange of things of value to advance the purpose:

- Contingent Reward: The leader exchanges the efforts of the followers for specific rewards.
- Management by exception: The leader uses corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement to direct the followers.

The laissez-faire leadership factor essentially shows that there is no leadership from the leaders, which presents the opposite end of the continuum from transformational leadership.

Connecting to these leadership factors from their research on transformational and charismatic leadership, Rowold and Heinitz (2007) found that transformational and charismatic leadership augmented the impact of transactional leadership. This reveals the fact that there is not one leadership that happens in an organization but an array or spectrum. Organizations led from a more transformational leadership posture tend to be more successful and profitable because the transformational leadership augments the impact of many parts of transactional

leadership (Rowold & Heinitz, 2007). While it is apparent that transformational leadership is the strong winner in effective leadership, Stewart (2006) made an interesting and compelling case for it within educational leadership, which connects it to my research questions.

In her research, Stewart (2006) reviewed the literature on transformational leadership and educational leadership and finds from Bass that an educational leader would lead best by practicing “the transformational components more frequently and the transactional components less frequently” (p. 13). According to her synthesized research, Stewart (2006) claimed that transformational leadership is the accepted form of educational leadership. This is what people are expecting from educational leaders in order to improve school operations and student learning; however, there needs to be a contingency model that allows for the appropriate leadership style to be used according to the needs of the school (Stewart, 2006).

Theoretical Applications

Covey’s eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership present three theoretical approaches to leadership. I will use them to analyze, code into thematic labels, and make sense of the responses of the superintendents by looking through these lenses in Table 6.

Table 6

Three Theoretical Frameworks for Effective Superintendents in CSI Schools

Covey’s 8 Habits	Servant Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Be proactive.	Empowering and developing people	Factor 1: Idealized Influence
Begin with the end in mind.	Humility	Factor 2: Inspirational Motivation
Put first things first.	Authenticity	Factor 3: Intellectual Stimulation
Think win/win.	Interpersonal acceptance	Factor 4: Individualized Consideration

Seek first to understand, then be understood.	Providing direction
Synergize.	Stewardship
Sharpen the saw.	Van Dierendonck (as cited in Parris & Peachey, 2013)
Find your voice and help others find theirs.	

In the next section, I explain the methodology that I used to perform this qualitative research through a collective case study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In this chapter, I explain the methodology used to complete the research on effective practices of Christian school superintendents. This includes the use of qualitative research through a collective case study in which I interviewed eight superintendents, who were identified by directors of Christian organizations supporting Christian schools in the United States and Canada. Creswell (2007) focused on the “process of research as flowing from philosophical assumptions, to worldviews and through a theoretical lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems” (p. 37). This process gives voice to Christian school superintendents through interview conversations, revealing their effective practices. In addition to discussing the research design, I explain the process for selecting participants and for collecting and analyzing the data from the interviews.

Research Design

I used qualitative research to explore, understand, and make sense of the experiences and challenges of being an effective superintendent in a Christian school. There is intimacy and meaning in qualitative research, which “involves closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, the participants, and the readers of a study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). To understand and experience the effective practices of successful Christian school superintendents, I used qualitative research because of the intimate conversations that can take place, representing these superintendents’ world and life views. We can learn from these superintendents’ practices to improve the effectiveness of our Christian schools by improving the leadership and, in turn, improving the teaching and student learning in them.

I conducted a collective case study as my methodology for addressing the issue of effective practices of superintendents in Christian schools. This study focused on the issue of how and why superintendents are effective in their leadership of Christian schools. A case study is most effective in answering these questions because there are “clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and [the collective case study] seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (Creswell, 2007, p.74). A collective case study provides a view into a clear understanding of these superintendents’ situations and practices.

Sampling Procedure

I used purposeful sampling to select school leaders who have a minimum of four years of school leadership experience in successful private Christian schools from within the Christian Schools International (CSI) network. To do this, I began by contacting three directors, listed below, of three organizations that support the mission, service, and growth of Christian schools in the United States and Canada in order to get the list of possible effective superintendents. First, the Van Lunen Center, located in Grand Rapids, MI, “exists to provide world-class executive management education essential to the future of Christian schools.” Yvonne Ferwerda is the executive director of the Van Lunen Center. Next, the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education’s (CACE) purpose “is to walk alongside Christian schools who are committed to teaching from a Biblical perspective. We exist for the sustainability, improvement, innovation, advocacy, and promotion of Christian education at all levels of learning.” Tim Van Soelen is the director of CACE. Last, Christian Schools International (CSI) “advances Christian education and supports schools in their task of teaching students to know God and his world and to glorify him through obedient service.” Joel Westa is the president/CEO of CSI.

I asked each of the three directors for 10 to 15 names of superintendents of Christian schools whom they believed were highly effective, and I identified superintendents who were recommended two or three times for my final list of nine. This effectiveness is the criteria by which the directors were to select their nominations. The three directors did not select the interviewees, so they did not have any knowledge of whom I ultimately interviewed, ensuring anonymity for the interviewee. I contacted nine potential participants in the study to see if they would be willing and qualified to participate in this study. As defined in the definition of terms section, *effective* means exceptionality that is “hard to find, worth trying to learn about and emulate, and carries with it a high degree of respect and value” (Leithwood, 1995, p. 7); it is also the “ability to convert creativity, mental ability, and knowledge into results; thus, the ability to achieve” (Drucker, 2001, p. 192). This effectiveness from Christian school superintendents is what I am researching, learning about, and reporting to others.

Participants

After comparing the three lists from the three directors of supporting organizations for Christian schools, I compiled a list of nine superintendents who were recommended by two or three of these directors. I contacted all nine, and eight agreed to participate in the study. I selected superintendents of successful private Christian schools from within the Christian Schools International (CSI) network who had a minimum of four years of school leadership experience as superintendents. All participants in this study are serving in schools that have an organizational structure and student enrollment that is large enough to require the position of a superintendent or head of school for each of their schools. Additionally, all of these superintendents have direct reports consisting of building principals as well as directors of other areas of the school such as finance, development, education, and admissions. In the next section,

I describe each of the schools where these superintendents serve, including the size of the school, the community demographic, the region where the school is located, and the size of the staff in the school. I am using pseudonyms for the schools and the superintendents. It is also important to note that some of these participants have titles other than superintendent, such as executive director, but I am using superintendent as the title for all of them since their roles are synonymous to that of a superintendent.

Description of Participants and Their Schools

The descriptions of the eight participants' schools and other information provides the reader with context for the size and locations of the schools as well as their student ethnic percentages. This gives a glimpse into these superintendents' leadership worlds. Table 7 provides the pseudonyms for the superintendents and their schools, and also indicates their genders, years of experience, and degrees earned.

Table 7

Superintendent and School Pseudonyms, Gender, Experience, and Education

Name and School	Gender	Years in School leadership	Education – degrees earned
Blake Paschal Springsteen Christian School	Male	20+	- Master's Degree in Educational Administration - Van Lunen Center Fellows Program - training in Executive Management in Christian Schools
Dirk Michaels King Christian School	Male	10+	- Master's Degree in Education Leadership and Administration
Dave Templeton Dylan Christian School	Male	25+	- Master's Degree in Education Leadership
Dylan Tanner Lincoln Christian School	Male	10+	- Harvard University – A professional development program on Leadership

Hillary Wolcott Anderson Christian School	Female	5+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Van Lunen Center Fellows Program - training in Executive Management in Christian Schools - Van Lunen Center Fellows Program – training in Executive Management in Christian Schools
Luke Diez Adams Christian School	Male	20+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's Degree in Education in Leadership Studies - PhD in Educational Leadership and Organization Studies
Mike Davelaar Mumford Christian School	Male	10+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision - Van Lunen Center Fellows Program – training in Executive Management in Christian Schools
Sid Jacox Keys Christian School	Male	15+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Another Fellows Program - Master's Degree in Educational Leadership - Several Courses toward an Master's Degree in Business Administration

Blake Paschal is a superintendent in western Canada at Springsteen Christian School which has student enrollment over 1,400, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. He leads about 60 teachers and 20 support staff. Paschal has served over 20 years as a school leader and five years at Springsteen Christian, which serves an urban population of families that is somewhat ethnically diverse: 60% white, 20% Asian, 10% black, and 10% First Nations. These families also represent a very diverse socio-economic population.

Dirk Michaels is a superintendent in the Midwestern United States at King Christian School which has student enrollment over 1,100, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. He leads about 90 teachers and 80 support staff. Michaels has served over 10 years as a school leader. King Christian serves an urban population of families that is somewhat ethnically diverse: 74% white, 19% black, 3% international students, 2% Asian, 1% Hispanic, and 1% other. These families also represent a very diverse socio-economic population, but the majority are middle to upper class.

Dave Templeton is a superintendent in the Midwestern United States at Dylan Christian School, which has student enrollment over 2,300, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. He leads about 150 teachers and 40 support staff. Templeton has served over 25 years as a school leader. Dylan Christian serves an urban and suburban population of families that is somewhat ethnically diverse: 75% white and 25% black. These families also represent a diverse socio-economic population, but the majority are middle to upper class.

Dylan Tanner is a superintendent in the Eastern United States at Lincoln Christian School, which has student enrollment over 800, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. He leads about 80 teachers and 40 support staff. Tanner has served over 10 years as a school leader. Lincoln Christian serves an urban and suburban population of families that is somewhat ethnically diverse: 60% white, 20% Asian, 9% Hispanic, 9% black, and 2% other. These families also represent a very diverse socio-economic population, but the majority are middle to upper class.

Hillary Wolcott is a superintendent in the Midwestern United States at Anderson Christian School, which has student enrollment over 500, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. She leads about 40 teachers and 20 support staff. Wolcott has served 5 years as a school leader. Anderson Christian serves an urban and suburban population of families that is quite ethnically homogenous: 85% white and the remaining 15% are black, Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, and Indian. These families also represent a diverse socio-economic population, but the average is middle to upper class. Fifty percent of the families do receive some level of variable tuition assistance.

Luke Diez is a superintendent in Western Canada at Adams Cristian School, which has student enrollment over 1,200, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. He leads about

80 teachers and 70 support staff. Diez has served over 20 years as a school leader. Adams Christian serves an urban and suburban population of families that is very ethnically diverse with about 25% white students and the rest being Asian, black, Latino, and European. These families also represent a very diverse socio-economic population, but the majority are lower middle class.

Mike Davelaar is a superintendent in the Midwestern United States at Mumford Christian School, which has student enrollment over 1,700, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. He leads about 100 teachers and 40 support staff. Davelaar has served over 10 years as a school leader. Mumford Christian serves a suburban and rural population of families that is somewhat ethnically diverse: 87% white, 4% Asian, 4% Hispanic, 2% multiracial, 1% black, and 2% other. These families also represent a very diverse socio-economic population, but the majority are middle to upper class.

Sid Jacox is a superintendent in Western Canada at Keys Christian School, which has student enrollment over 1,100, serving students in preschool through 12th grade. He leads about 60 teachers and 60 support staff. Jacox has served over 15 years as a school leader. Keys Christian serves a suburban and rural population of families. Jacox did not provide student ethnicity data. These families of Keys Christian represent a diverse socio-economic population, but the majority are middle class.

Data Collection

I collected data from these school leaders in two stages. First, I had each leader complete a questionnaire for demographic information (current role, years of teaching and/or administration – including in what roles, school data: numbers of staff, students, grade levels) as well as their five most effective practices as heads of school (see Appendix D for the questionnaire). Second, I conducted one-on-one, personal interviews of successful

superintendents by online video meetings through ZOOM video conferencing or by face-to-face interviews, using an interview protocol (see Appendix E for the interview protocol). Seven interviews were completed through online video conferencing, and one was face-to-face, which I audio recorded and had transcribed.

Prior to the interviews, I received consent from each interviewee to participate in this study, informing them of the study's purpose, the length of the interview, the plans for the use of the results, and the opportunity to remove themselves from the study at any time during or after the interview (Appendix F). I gave them the questions for the interview at least a week ahead of time. I assured participants of confidentiality in several ways:

- Before: with consent forms that refer to confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms for each participant and their school
- During: verbal assurance of my confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms
- After: removed identifiers to make a clean data set, such as names or data that would reveal the superintendents or their schools, while not altering the truth of the data

These efforts and actions protected the identity of the participants and the data they shared.

I followed the University of St. Thomas's institutional review board's (UST's IRB) expectations and regulations by having each interviewee read and sign the consent forms required (see Appendix G). UST's IRB approved my research at an expedited level because there was only minimal risk to the interviewees and yet there is private and identifiable information that they shared. The access to these interviewees as well as the rapport I needed to establish was aided by the fact that the IRB approved my research and by the fact that I am a superintendent in a similar school as those in the study; however, a calm, confidential, and safe atmosphere was established by me, the interviewer.

These interviews were audio-recorded using ZOOM video conferencing. The interviews took between one and two hours. I had the interviews transcribed through the Scribie online transcription service with anonymity assured. I shared the transcripts with each of the interviewees and allowed them to clarify or correct anything they wanted to, as well as kept the option open for follow up interviews as a member check. The transcripts were kept on my laptop, which is password protected, and on a remote hard drive in my locked office to assure their security.

Data Analysis

I read the transcripts and coded them. I coded these qualitative data in two stages to identify meaning and themes and then to focus my thinking and determine meaning through close, repeated reading and questioning. The first time I read each transcript, I coded statements literally and made summary statements. The second time I read the transcripts, I looked for themes and concepts to which the superintendents were referring. Seven themes emerged from this process, to which I assigned seven highlighting colors found in Word. I completed all of this coding using a Word document where I put the transcripts in tables (see Appendix H), and I then brought the color-coded themes into a document where themes from each of the superintendents' interviews were sorted. I have included a sample page in the appendix in order to show what this part of the coding process looked like (see Appendix I). I also kept notes to record thoughts, questions, and ideas.

From these codes, I established patterns and themes and finally presented an in-depth picture of effective practices of successful superintendents in CSI schools as a result of analyses of these superintendents' cases. I started by using a within-case analysis of the superintendent interviews by coding each of the eight transcripts individually. I then conducted cross-case

analyses, and determined themes that spanned all interviews. Seven major themes emerged from this process.

Research Validity and Reliability

I appreciate Wolcott's approach to qualitative research about understanding what was going on rather than convincing others of its validity (1990). Wolcott stresses doing the qualitative research correctly rather than trying to prove that qualitative research is valid. I have pursued doing qualitative research correctly using good processes. While this is true, research validity is extremely important for the quality and significance of the case study research that I am performing. Johnson (2008) explains three types of validity important in supporting qualitative research:

- Descriptive validity “refers to accuracy in reporting descriptive information” (2008, p. 141)
- Interpretive validity: “refers to the degree to which the research participants' viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood by the qualitative researchers and portrayed in the research report” (2008, p. 141)
- Theoretical validity: “a theoretical explanation developed from a research study fits the data and, therefore, is credible and defensible” (2008, p. 142)

I worked toward providing support for descriptive and interpretive validity by being honest, transparent, and critical of my analysis, but also by having a peer debriefer review my coding as well as having my dissertation committee review my work. Theoretical analysis gives theoretical validity using a comparison between thematic findings and the following theories:

- 8 habits of highly effective people
- Servant leadership

- Transformational leadership

Validation was also made through “extensive time in the field, the detailed, thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 207). These aspects of research ensured validation was pursued, displayed, and accomplished: peer review, theoretical support, time in the field, description, and closeness to the participants. While I was not literally in the field with the participants, I did spend one and a half to two hours of time in the interviews with each person.

I recognize that as a collective case study, there were limitations inherent in the information gathering because of the size of the group and unique experience of each. Research saturation combated this limitation by interviewing eight successful superintendents, which helped strengthen the validity of the study. By providing transcript review, as a member check, I verified and validated the data with each superintendent.

I established my reliability through credibility; my bias as a researcher was addressed by a strategy called reflexivity. I reflected more on my potential biases and predispositions before researching, during, and after. Because I am a superintendent in a Christian school much like those of my eight interviewees, I have strong potential to draw conclusions and make assumptions about experiences of these effective superintendents based on my experiences rather than their experiences. However, I have a unique position to relate to, understand, and get closer to these superintendents because of my similar role.

As a researcher, I checked my researcher bias and enhanced my reliability by using a peer debriefer. To do this, I coded the transcribed interviews and had a peer debriefer code the same pages. This peer debriefer completed the same doctoral program that I have from the University

of St. Thomas and wrote an honors qualitative dissertation. We compared our coding, challenged each other's codes, and sometimes I adjusted my coding.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I am presenting the themes that emerged from the interviews, coding, and questionnaires. These seven themes make up the content of the chapter. Within each theme, there are several topics that support the main theme. Throughout the discussion, the superintendents shared quotes, data, and information that I used to give evidence for the seven themes stemming from the research questions.

Eight superintendents responded to the following research questions: What are the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents associated with growth and improvement in CSI schools' operations and student learning? The sub-questions are the following:

1. What is effective leadership in schools?
2. In what ways do previous educational training and experiences affect the work of successful superintendents?
3. What are the environmental, emotional, social, and spiritual experiences and perspectives of effective superintendents?

These sub-questions guided the research, interview questions, and thought processing; however, I do not answer them directly but indirectly through the seven themes described below.

The eight superintendents presented crucial and beneficial information on effective Christian school leadership through their interviews and through the questionnaires that they completed for this study. This information distilled into seven themes: faith in God and His calling to leadership; focus on mission, vision, and strategic planning; engaging in relationships; superintendent leadership with the board and administration team; gifted, educated, and passionate about leadership; pursue growth and excellence in and for the school; and practice

effective leadership skills – habits, tasks, and practices. These themes are explained below but are not listed in any order, significance, or priority.

Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership

All eight superintendents shared their belief and faith in God, personally and professionally, recognizing their role in God's story for their individual lives and the lives of their schools – staff, students, families, and community. They openly discussed their faith, God's call for them to the vocation of leadership, and religious attributes necessary to lead effectively.

These superintendents are referring to a Christian, Trinitarian faith that is rooted in the Reformed worldview given their leadership in CSI schools. I have analyzed their responses with this same worldview in mind best explained in basic terms through the Apostles' Creed and in depth through religious documents such as the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Belgic Confession. The Apostles' Creed (<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/apostles-creed>) reads as follows:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic* church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

**that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places*

The Apostles' Creed summarizes this worldview. Additionally, through this section, I will use God to refer to the Trinitarian view of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all three as one God.

Religious Faith, Growth, and Fulfillment

Seven of the eight superintendents shared the importance of having a deep, growing, personal faith in God exemplified by regular, personal Bible reading, devotions, and prayer as well as regularly attending a Christian church. They saw this faith and growth as fulfilling and essential in their lives and leadership. Luke Diez explained, "I try and start each day with just some time in quiet and some centering prayer and have a little Celtic devotional." Dave Templeton added, "And it's allowed me to become far, even more, reflective of the importance and value of faith nurture, personally, and in the lives of kids." Hillary Wolcott explained, "I've had to learn to develop more solitude, more time to think, pray, reflect, learn in a spiritual manner, to make sure I'm always growing, I'm reflecting, I'm learning what it means to be a follower of Christ." These quotes and other statements from other superintendents solidify the

need for Christian school superintendents to have an active, growing faith in God through devotions, prayer, and living.

Several superintendents expressed the need to have faith in God's leading and working in each of their lives whether through personal challenges or joys, explaining that these things shape them and draw them closer to God and his plan for their lives. Two superintendents spoke on this clearly. Wolcott explained,

So it's not such a steep learning curve all the time, but that I could really take all of my life's experiences that God has given me and shaped me with and use them somewhere where I'm not on such a steep learning curve. And maybe that will never happen. Maybe we're always supposed to be on a steep learning curve because it keeps us on our knees [in prayer] and... I don't know. But the work... All of the work has always seemed a lot bigger and a little out of reach for me.

This expresses her need for God and his leadership in her life. Dylan Tanner added from his experiences working in the Twin Towers,

I think that the events of September 11 tested my leadership skills, showing up and trying to provide leadership and comfort to a group of people who'd seen close friends killed the week before. It was a real test. I think that that experience certainly led me to think more deeply about my faith and deepened my faith.

These challenges, as well as their personal relationship with God, led these superintendents to leadership in Christian schools and deepened their faith in God.

God's Call to Leadership

All eight superintendents spoke of a sense of calling from God into Christian school leadership. The concept of "calling" articulates active leading from God to these superintendents

into Christian school leadership. They felt God led them through their talents and abilities, through other people's actions and encouragement, through circumstances and leadership opportunities throughout their lives, and through the prompting of the Holy Spirit's work in each of them. Martin Luther and John Calvin promoted the concept of "vocation" as divine calling into occupations, whether secular or religious. This connects to the calling that these superintendents articulated during the interviews. Diez said, "I love Jesus and I like learning and thinking. And so, Christian education is actually a mix of three biggest loves of my life. So yeah, kind of felt like it landed in my sweet spot." His "sweet spot" is Christian education leadership because of the convergence of his belief in God, liking learning, and being reflective. This is also evidence of the superintendent's need to provide leadership, service, and shepherding.

Religious Leadership, Service, and Shepherding

These superintendents saw themselves as significant religious leaders in their schools. They knew that they were the primary leaders for staff, students, and families, even the community; however, the superintendents also shared their desire to serve, not to be served, to support, and to be pastoral. This presents an interesting paradox – these leaders know they have authority and power as the leader of the school, yet they strive to serve God by serving others in the school and its surrounding community. Sid Jacox explained:

I love that it aligns with my faith. So much for me, so much of faith is about living and worshipping in the context of my doing. That's how I live. So my doing is my faith. And so my faith is lived out in my leadership. That's kind of how I've tried to rationalize it with people. And then stemming out of that, is I enjoy leadership, I enjoy the rush of... To me, one of the biggest things in leadership is when...I'm not the one that gets all the

accolades, others do. But I know I've been a part of propping that person or that group up, to get the accolades.

Jacox adds, “And to me, at the end of the day, being a Christian school superintendent is still about kids flourishing.” He, and the others, are leading to serve so others flourish so God is served. Their desire to lead was rooted in honoring, glorifying, and serving God who is Lord over all things.

Another area of religious leadership that superintendents shared was the high demand for superintendents as leaders in Christian schools. There is a shortage and, therefore, there is a shortage of religious leadership in the world. This is a challenge many schools face as they strive to enact their missions.

Last is the strong support that superintendents need to be shepherds or pastoral, particularly as schools and their communities struggle with tragedy, challenges, and worldly chaos. The school community needs strong religious leadership. Mike Davelaar, having experienced deep difficulty explained, “And last year we had an incredibly difficult year with a lot of death and tragedy within the school community involving a couple of staff members or students, and he [his mentor] said, ‘Your role that year was like mourner-in-chief.’ ” This supports the role and effort of superintendent to lead through good and difficult times. This leadership requires strong biblical attributes of the superintendents.

Attributes for Leadership

All eight superintendents spoke of spiritual attributes that are essential to effective leadership for superintendents in Christian schools. By attributes, I am referring to personal qualities that are inherent and essential for effective leadership. The superintendents mentioned

these attributes in a biblical context as qualities they were expected to emulate in their leadership:

- Trustworthy, having integrity, truthful, transparent: A leader has to be honest, open, and full of integrity in order to be effective with his or her followers.
- Humility, vulnerable, authentic - avoiding ego, pride, and defensiveness: A leader has to be humble within the context of leadership in order to learn and grow from mistakes and challenges as well as being receptive to input.
- Patient – avoiding impatience or forcefulness: A leader has to be patient through change, improvement, and mistakes.
- Gracious and serving: A leader has to be gracious with others and himself or herself in order to emulate the serving life God has called us to live.
- Grateful, encouraging: A leader needs to be grateful and encouraging to board, staff, students, families, and the community for their effort, commitment, and support.
- Reflective, contemplative: A leader needs to reflect on his or her leadership, responsibilities, and the mission of the school, contemplating where God is leading him or her as well as the organization.

These attributes are necessary for effective religious leadership as a superintendent, emulating biblical principles lived out by Jesus.

Focus on Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning

All eight superintendents plainly spoke of the deep need to focus on the mission and vision of the school where they were serving, but that focus was deepened around the mission and vision of Christian education as a whole, not just for their individual school. When these superintendents mentioned mission, it appears that they were referring to their school's mission

statement, which seemed to focus on educating students academically and religiously. When they mentioned vision, they were referring to the plans, growth, and improvement for their school, which involved the use of a strategic plan. Again, all eight superintendents spoke extensively on the need to stay committed to and focused on the mission and vision of Christian education using a strategic plan to accomplish it.

Mission and Vision

The superintendents saw the mission and vision of the school as their primary focus, priority, and responsibility. They were also passionate about Christian education, committing their professional work and service to it. This is strong evidence for their passion and vision for Christian education, exhausting and inspiring each of them. Dirk Michaels explains it well,

But we have to keep Christ as the focus, make certain that Christ is preeminent in every single program of our school, everything that we do. And I believe that as we do that, that God's gonna continue to honor the Christian Day school. But the moment we start to just become another educational institution, and we may have a couple of Bible classes and maybe have chapel once a week, and that's what makes us Christian, I don't see that as a... God's not gonna honor that.

Michaels and others spoke of and support the view in Christian education plainly spoken by Abraham Kuyper: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!” In Christian commitment, these superintendents are serving God in order to further his kingdom.

They use their gifts and abilities to complement their passion and work, supporting their sense of calling to lead in Christian education. Ultimately, they are passionate and committed to Christian education because of their sense of calling to it, and because of their view that Jesus

Christ is Lord over all things as quoted above. Because of this passion and their abilities, they claimed that they have to articulate the mission and cast the vision for Christian education in and for their Christian schools. They also work to expand both the mission and vision of their individual schools in order to serve more Christian families and God.

Many of the superintendents referred to the history and legacy of Christian education and of their school's mission, "always keeping the main thing the main thing," where Blake Paschal cites one of Stephen Covey's seven habits. They were emphasizing the rich history that their schools had through Christian Dutch immigrants who started many of these schools in the United States and Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Michaels explains, "And so we've been able, I think, to balance and cherish our roots and our history, while at the same time, embracing an entirely radically different community here at King Christian." The superintendents were committed to remembering that history and legacy while expanding the mission and vision in order to serve families today. Michaels adds, "Today we're probably one-third Dutch-Christian Reform, that's our history, that's our backbone, that's our traditions, but then the other two-thirds of our school community are now from about 250 other churches and reflect a great diversity within Christendom." He and others articulate the vision of providing Christian education to more Christian families from more Christian denominations than these schools have in the past.

This service takes personal commitment, courage, and strength in leadership for Christian education. This focus of leadership is professional but it is also personal, stemming back to their own families and how they were raised. Several superintendents referred to their parents being committed to Christian education, who then encouraged their children, these superintendents, to do the same. Paschal talked about his father serving on the board and his dedication to Christian education, encouraging Paschal to be committed to it also; however, his father did not encourage

him to be a teacher or leader in Christian education. Michaels' family did encourage him to teach and lead in Christian schools.

The focus on mission and vision also has roots in the community, which supports and is passionate about Christian education. Reciprocally, the Christian school also serves the community. Templeton supports this: "Our schools are important to our communities and to our families and to the Kingdom of God." These superintendents' communities have a deep need for their Christian school. These school superintendents and communities also appreciate and recognize their religious and political freedom allowing them to support Christian education – its mission and vision. Templeton continues,

We have 0% of the federal oversight, red tape, that in fact, slows progress down in my mind. So, for us as Christian schools to not be premiere, that's incomprehensible to me because we have parents...who deeply love and support us and we have nobody telling us how to do our job from the federal level or state level.

These communities have high expectations and hopes for their children's Christian education within modern culture's freedoms and challenges.

These superintendents also spoke of the mission and vision of Christian education inspiring, directing, and motivating people who are connected to the school. Staff have the mission and vision to guide their teaching or supporting work. The board and administration have the mission and vision to guide their decision-making and strategic hopes for the school. Supporters and donors have the mission and vision to connect with through volunteering, donating, or advising to the Christian school. For example, Templeton claims,

[I]learned quickly that astute individuals within the community who fund us and do other things, recognize that the school had leadership, and that person's ability to articulate

vision and what's necessary and needed is absolutely essential for, in order to gain the confidence of the charitable community to help you get where you need to go.

These superintendents know that their community supports their school in their successes and through their challenges.

Though there is uncertainty, challenges, and threats to Christian education, the eight superintendents referred to the mission and vision as their focus – not people, not programs, not success, but the mission and vision. Davelaar advocated for this when describing his commitment to the vision he has for Mumford Christian, not necessarily staff who are not committed. The challenges that schools and their superintendents faced were discouraging for these leaders; however, their strength and fortitude rested in the vision they had for the school. I will discuss leadership challenges in the upcoming section on pursuing excellence and growth for the school.

Part of the mission and vision for Christian schools is to bring restoration to a world struggling with the effects of sin. One superintendent, Davelaar, articulated this well,

The language that we use here to try to encapsulate the grand narrative of scripture is that God is working his purposes... he has invited us as human beings to be partners in that process. And the language that we use to describe those purposes is the idea of bringing shalom, this flourishing, this fullness, this whatever, to places of chaos.

These superintendents articulated a hope for restoration through the mission and vision of Christian education, bringing shalom, order out of chaos. This work gets accomplished through the nurturing, teaching, and training of the students.

Christian education focuses on students: Faith and excellence. All eight superintendents spoke of the importance and impact of the mission and vision of the school

focusing on each student's education. Their students need a quality, excellent education that grounds and centers each student in their faith in God. Tanner spoke of this: "Our role as a Christian school has got to be to prepare men and women of character and competence who are prepared to lead." He and all of the other superintendents spoke of the same thing – Christian education that will prepare students to serve God in the world, cause student flourishing, and bring the truth of God to the world. Jacox supported this: "At the end of the day, being a Christian school superintendent is still about kids flourishing." Effective Christian education leadership from the superintendent focuses on students!

Several spoke about the content of their school's curriculum, teacher instruction, and ultimately student learning. Paschal spoke about New Pedagogies of Deeper Learning (NPDL) and Teaching for Transformation (TfT), both of which focus on 21st century learning for the students in which students are found doing real work on real issues for real people. NPDL expects teacher instruction and student learning to focus on six core areas: collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, citizenship, character, and communication. Wolcott also supported TfT as her leadership vision for the school because of its Christian focus on student learning and service to God. These comments supported the Christian school effort to follow their mission and vision in order to nurture, challenge, and educate students.

Students changing the world for Christ. Ultimately, these superintendents expected the student education at their schools to prepare each student to go out into the world to transform the world for God. This is the mission and vision of Christian education. Tanner said,

That's what we've gotta do. Our responsibility is for this next generation of Christian leaders, and if we do a good job, we increase the church's influence in society. If we don't

do a good job, we're leaving the field to somebody else. That's why I'm convicted that this [Christian education] is the most important work that we can possibly be doing.

Christian education is an institution from God to change the world for God. Templeton stated that his school's mission is "to equip our kids to be effective servants of Christ in contemporary society. That's our mission statement." Again, this emphasizes the focus of successful Christian schools educating students so they can bring restoration and the Good News of God to the world. Christian education changes the world.

Using a strategic plan to support and advance the mission and expand the vision. In order to most effectively serve and change the world for God, superintendents and successful schools use a strategic plan. The superintendent is the strategic plan's supervisor or manager, leading the charge for growth and improvement for staff, students, and the school community. All eight superintendents spoke plainly about their responsibility to lead the efforts, the focus, and the action steps of the strategic plan. For example, Jacox supported this well:

I think one way to just measure how we have been effective is just looking on the strategic plan and seeing whether or not initiatives are getting met or not. In our context, our board has... I helped the board set up a great measurement tool. So we look at what team is the champion, what the deadline is, when the resources are needed for the initiative, and benchmarks, measurables, and then a long explanation for each initiative. He clearly articulates the need for the superintendent to be the leader of the implementation of the strategic plan for these successful Christian schools.

Successful Christian schools show effective leadership by having and using a strategic plan, which promotes the mission and vision of each school. These strategic plans had several key aspects to them according to these superintendents:

- They were established collaboratively using a thorough process involving staff, students, and the school community, reflecting the school community.
- They were focused on the mission and vision. The board and superintendent lead the plan. The mission and vision drive the strategic plan; not the other way around.
- They have specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals and are often connected to an accreditation process.
- They have a four to five year span, and then a new plan is written.

Templeton explains these points:

We're in the process of finalizing the next four-year strategic plan in the next couple of months. Seeking the input from those relevant stakeholders, and it changes from strategic plan to strategic plan, who [people involved in the strategic planning process] those people are and how broadly it needs to be put out there. Some are broad, some are not. I think the whole strategic guidance and direction, and setting the tone, and then articulating a vision. That articulating a vision, to me, is absolutely essential.

Successful Christian schools have and use a robust strategic plan to advance the mission and vision of their schools.

Engaging in Relationships

Successful Christian school superintendents are engaged in meaningful and substantial relationships with stakeholders: staff and administration, board members, parents, students and community members. Community members include professors from graduate schools that the superintendents attended, pastors of their churches or in the community, mentors, donors, other community leaders, and friends. Establishing and building relationships is an effective school leadership practice that enhances the culture and climate of the school.

Relationships with Staff

The eight superintendents whom I interviewed all spoke of their meaningful relationships with their staff, enjoying the camaraderie and teambuilding with them, but struggling with the challenges that come with staff relations. They also shared their actions and desires to serve and support their staff. Davelaar supports this by saying,

Then you'll have times where a particular person, whether that's a teacher, or a principal, or another executive level admin might just be feeling kinda lousy about something. And how do you model enough care to shepherd them back to where they need to be, too? So, those are probably people where that kind of counseling pastoral piece comes in.

This comment shows the support that superintendents desire to provide their staff. But there are struggles too, as Tanner comments on,

I think my greatest struggles and the things that have kept me awake at night haven't been things, they've been people issues, hard personal decisions that we've had to make, hard disciplinary things that we've had to do. Those are the struggles in my mind.

This comment evidences the hardship that comes from troubling things, even tragedies and disciplinary matters with staff that affect the relationships with employees. On either side of relationships, positive or negative, there was strong evidence of the value of staff relationships with staff.

Relationships with Students and Parents

Only a few superintendents mentioned relationships with students or parents, and they were encouraging and supportive comments about collaborating with students and their parents around the cause of Christian education whether in positive situations or disciplinary circumstances. Nonetheless, the lack of comments by all of the superintendents was evidence of

their focus on other relationships with staff, mentioned above, and with community members, described below.

Relationships with Community Members

These community members, whether professors, pastors, donors, mentors (which I will discuss more in the learning section), or friends, are important relationships for these superintendents. The community members support and encourage the superintendents, but the superintendents play a supporting role for the community members too. Most of the superintendents spoke of this relationship. For example, Templeton explained,

I meet with the (local) public schools' superintendent probably four times a year, sit down together. She's great. We have a very good relationship, and we just stay connected. And she counts on me to help support what they need to do, and I count on her to help support what we need. And we have a good relationship that way.

This relationship is valuable for moral and organizational support. Wolcott spoke of her personal relationships with her community,

During that year and a half, I really relied on others at a different level, and that was good for people. And it was good for me too. And I leaned into my community. People know me as being... I'm known as being a strong person. And my strength, took on something different. I leaned into our people. I let them in on it, in a pretty big way and became more vulnerable with our community while still leading the school.

This is evidence of the positive impact that supportive, reciprocal relationships can have for the leaders and their communities as well as the positive culture in their schools.

Establishing a Relational Culture

All of the superintendents spoke of and advocated for engaging, supportive, and meaningful relationships in their school cultures. These relationships seemed to be necessary for and supportive of several aspects for healthy school culture: building and maintaining trust, promoting change and improvement, supporting one another, and even earning one of the schools a best workplace award in its state. Diez commented on how being in relationship builds trust, how consistency in leadership action builds trust, and how speaking directly to people builds trust. However, Davelaar shared about the complexity that comes when a leader has a relationship with a person but has to have a crucial conversation. He shared that this can make it difficult, but it is still necessary. Michaels explained his love for people through relationships:

I genuinely love the people I work with, the people that I serve. It's not uncommon for me to even use those words, to tell people I love them...I would hope that people would say, a practice of mine, a habit of mine is loving people.

While none of the other superintendents spoke of their love for the people they worked with and served, they did share of their concern, empathy, and support, building relationships with them through these relational actions. Relationships with staff and the community were critical for these superintendents.

Superintendent Leadership with the Board and Administration Team

Each of the eight superintendents spoke extensively about their work with and for the board and administration. The superintendents described their role within the school as leader and servant, informant and director. I will describe the board and administration relationship, the styles of leadership used by these superintendents, the culture of trust that is pursued and established, staffing, and administrative longevity.

Providing Leadership with the Board and Administration Team

The school board directs the mission and vision of the school and is responsible for holding the school in trust. They are governance boards, and the superintendents work for and report to them for the leadership of the daily functioning of the schools. I will describe the effective, working relationship described between the board and superintendent.

Successful schools and superintendents are involved with and led by boards that hold the mission of the Christian school and cast vision for its future. These are governance boards, responsible also for governing or leading the school through policy. These boards accomplish most of their work through the superintendent and his administrative team but also through board committees or task forces. These committees and task forces work on financial, promotional, and many other challenges, bringing expertise and accountability to aspects of the school.

These boards expect their superintendents to lead and manage the daily operations of the school and hold him or her accountable through strategic goals, policies, and budgets. They also support their superintendents with these goals, policies, and budgets. Additionally, the boards of these successful Christian schools try to have little involvement in the details of the daily operations of the school, trying to provide visionary leadership for and through the superintendent. Jacox explained it this way, “Someone explained my role as a bit of a funnel between the community and the board, and then to the staff... There's the board this way, and then there's the staff here.” This is the unique position of the superintendent, positioned between the board and the staff.

This unique position does create some challenges for the board and superintendent. Differences and even disagreements take place because of the lack of clarity in each of the roles,

creating a disconnect or tension between the board and superintendent. Open, direct, and honest communication with the board was critical in order to minimize these differences.

Uniquely, however, when the board and superintendent relations are in good order, the relationship can and should be reciprocal, mutually beneficial where they learn from each other. These superintendents did talk about the opportunities they had to train the board on their role as well as recruit potential board members. Many going to great lengths to establish and deepen relationships with the board as a group and with individual board members in order to learn from them and teach them. “Our board is strong but it requires a lot of work from me to help the board be effective and so I meet regularly with individual board members because I’m just proactive, explained Diez.” This describes the active role that superintendents play in board effectiveness. Additionally, superintendents spoke of learning from their board members on leadership or their specific areas of expertise. This relationship and learning from board members to superintendents connects the board to other administrators through the authority and leadership of the superintendent. The superintendent is the connection between the board and the administration team and their staff.

The administration team, from what was mentioned in the interviews, is made up of building principals, and leaders in finance, student learning and support, development or advancement, and admissions. These teams at each of the schools of the superintendents that I interviewed support the mission and vision of the school, report to the superintendent in the schools, and perform and support the work required of them. This appears to be a common structure in the eight schools of the superintendents interviewed. Several common themes about the superintendent and administration team relationship came from my interviews.

The superintendents are leading leaders, supporting, encouraging, and empowering them, as well as giving them leadership opportunities, autonomy, and resources. All of the superintendents spoke of the significance of this leadership relationship as well as how incredible each of the administrators were. Michaels said, “So we have some top notch people in our principals, directors of the curriculum and instruction, teaching and learning coaches that keep me a step away from the classroom,” and focusing on the mission and vision. I will discuss the leadership style later, but the emphasis was on the team that the administration created and the teamwork that was necessary to perform their work. Most of the superintendents dedicated the largest percentage of their time to working with and leading the administration team. Humorously and truthfully, Paschal articulated his administration team’s view of him: He is supposed to be “Santa Claus and Superman” for the staff! He can get anything and do everything for his team.

These administration teams, including the superintendent, present a deep and valuable set of gifts, talents, abilities that support the mission of the schools. When functioning best, these talents are complementary to each of the other administrator gifts. They are not competitive talents, but are supportive and collaborative talents. Additionally, it was explained that, while each administrator was talented in specific areas, these administrators left each other alone too. This complementary relationship increases productivity and trust within the administration team. Wolcott explained, “I have eight direct reports that I work with and I work to cultivate a sense of team, and work through them and with them.” These teams work well together, complementing one another’s work, and leave each other to do the work of their job description.

These superintendents referred to the chain of command within these schools often, where the authority starts with school community who elects the board, who hires the

superintendent, who then hires the administrators and staff, who then work with families and students. These schools' chains of commands are quite flat and collaborative, according to the superintendents.

Styles of Leadership

When asked, all eight of the superintendents spoke about some type of team-based, collaborative leadership. Specifically, seven (Davelaar, Diez, Michaels, Paschal, Templeton, Tanner, and Wolcott) used terms like shared leadership, team, relational, or flat. Davelaar used the metaphor of a casino for his leadership style where he is the pit boss and the board is the eye in the sky. Jacox claimed that he did not have a leadership style but preferred adapting to each situation and leading according to its demands; however, much of what he described was collaborative and serving.

Four superintendents (Diez, Jacox, Tanner, and Wolcott) used servant leadership language to describe their styles. These leaders spoke of serving others through their leadership in order for them to accomplish their work and inspire the flourishing of those whom they serve. Related to this, three superintendents (Davelaar, Michaels, and Templeton) spoke of their inspirational leadership, vision, and charisma that was helpful and meaningful for their leadership, followers, and accomplishing goals.

In summary, the superintendents supported a collaborative leadership style. This style works with the board, administration team, staff, and community to promote the mission of the schools and solve issues that arise. Additionally, because of the relational contact the administration team has, in particular, trust is established and maintained.

Trust between the Board, Administration Team, and the Superintendent

All eight superintendents spoke of building and maintaining a culture of trust, particularly between the board and administration team. This was critical for them. Diez explained, “But I think relationships with people are essential and, for me, that starts with my senior leadership team... so one of my roles is to be in a relationship with those people, yeah, so that I build trust, right?” Communication, administrators doing their jobs, and being leaders of good character with the spiritual attributes described above build trust within and in the team.

Five of the superintendents promoted the use of evaluations, performance reviews, and personal accountability as ways to build trust. Job qualifications and descriptions were the basis for these evaluations but also the basis for trust because everyone in administration knows the job that they are supposed to do. Using job descriptions assures the board and superintendent that the staff are doing their jobs, which builds board and administrative trust but also shows “fit” for individual staff members.

Staffing Fit with the Mission and Vision of the School

The theme of trust continues into school staff and their place or fit within the school, upholding and promoting its mission and vision. Collins explains this notion of fit when he says, “No, they first got the right people on the bus” (2001, p. 41), the bus here refers to the business or the organization. It appears that the superintendents, when talking about fit, were referring to job placement for staff members serving in their schools. They wanted their staff members to be serving in the right positions for the right reasons according to their strengths and gifting, but also according to their commitment and conduct.

These superintendents supported their staff. They were committed to encouraging, inspiring, and unifying them in a safe, trust-filled setting. Conversely, these superintendents also

appreciated the support of the staff, seeing them as leaders, within trusted relationships. Several superintendents spoke about instances when staffing changes, resignations, or firings took place causing diminished trust within the culture. Wolcott described it: “I had to discipline, or let staff go...a few disciplinary situations. It was really hard conversations with people.” These were difficult times for her and the rest of these superintendents.

Longevity and Succession Planning for Leadership

Five of the eight superintendents spoke about their longevity as a superintendent as an important aspect of effective leadership. These five have served an average of nine years. (All eight of them have served an average of eight years.) This was significant for the five superintendents for several reasons:

- According to one, school change takes 10 years, so longevity enables a superintendent to make the change for which he and the board had vision.
- According to another, longevity establishes credibility in the school and community.
- Lasting in the superintendent role is significant because he made it through his third board chair. He was referencing a class he attended where he heard the following:
 “70% of school heads don't get past their third board chair.”

Longevity in school leadership is valuable and an effective practice for successful leaders in successful schools.

Related to longevity, five superintendents mentioned succession planning as an effective strategy for school leadership, training future school leaders. These superintendents were actively engaged in recruiting and supporting potential school leaders. Two of the four superintendents referenced succession planning for the purpose of their retirement or possible transition out of their present school. One superintendent advocated for his school investing in

staff as new leaders regardless of whether they stayed in his school or not, simply wanting to support the cause of Christian education by providing training for possible leaders.

An effective practice of superintendents is to establish functioning, trusted working relationships with their board and their administration team. This leadership needs to be collaborative and focused on serving each other, staff, and students for the future of Christian education and the Kingdom of God. Leadership also requires a desire to learn about leadership.

Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership

The eight superintendents that I interviewed traced a clear path in their lives to Christian school leadership. They also described their education or training leading up to becoming a superintendent as well as their training while being a superintendent. In this, they all described a desire to continue to learn, grow, and deepen their abilities in leadership through leadership training, trying, and experience.

Educational Leadership Preparation, Careers, and Experience

All eight superintendents described their career track in educational leadership. Their progression to become a superintendent was quite similar except for one of them. Seven superintendents shared this basic story: they became teachers, then either a dean, vice-principal, or some intermediate leader in a school, then principal, then superintendent. One of these seven did all of this in public schools and then came to a Christian school as a superintendent. The eighth superintendent received his training and leadership in business, coming out of that into educational leadership. He survived an act of terrorism and continued to lead in that business for two years when he felt called to lead in Christian education. His story is worth sharing.

Tanner was in leadership in one of the companies in the World Trade Center when two planes stuck it, killing 295 of his colleagues. For two years, he took on a pastoral role in this

company, leading one of the six divisions of the companies. During this time, the school where he had served as board member, where his children had attended, and where he had attended, needed a superintendent. He applied and was given the job.

Tragedies like these change us. Another superintendent, Wolcott, is a cancer survivor. She was diagnosed, treated, and cured while in leadership but she spoke of cancer's effect on her life and leadership:

It's also just changed the way I handle stress... I don't let the little things get to me, I feel joy in a bigger way...I've always been willing to kill myself to get from A to B and I'm just not willing to do that if I'm gonna compromise my physical and emotional health. She leads differently than she did before as does Tanner. Life's challenges changed them.

These superintendents referred to other, less significant challenges that had or have an impact on their leadership. While they are less significant, they are worth mentioning since the superintendents used them as examples of challenges within their leadership:

- Leading in a school where they went to school
- Leading in older Christian schools where history and legacy heavily influence the culture
- The role of superintendent is not clear or consistent amidst schools
- The sudden swings from celebration to tragedy literally in moments within schools and having to compartmentalize these situations
- Working with upset parents

These challenges and others like it affect the superintendent's leadership, oftentimes making them more effective. Individuals spoke of leading in challenging times in order to be stabilizing, keeping morale positive for staff.

All of these superintendents shared earlier leadership experiences outside of their present roles that shaped and moved them into Christian educational leadership. Following are some the leadership opportunities they held prior to school leadership: church elder or deacon, a board member at a school or college, an athlete in high school and college, student leadership in school, or even social leadership within friend groups. Additionally, one spoke of discipline he received when he was school-aged that changed him and inspired him as a leader even today. All of these experiences prepared and connected them to leadership and specifically to Christian educational leadership.

All eight superintendents spoke of some connection to education and several spoke of a deep family connection to Christian education. Some spoke of being encouraged to become a teacher, while another spoke of being discouraged. Either way, those that spoke of their time as a teacher spoke fondly of it. Paschal shared that he loved teaching and education but certainly did not miss teaching or being with the students directly. He was now supporting Christian education in other ways. Because of their roles as teachers, their leadership roles grew from that of teacher to administrator to superintendent.

Several of the superintendents wondered about the skills and differences in business leadership and educational leadership. Their wondering was rooted in the fact that they experience the demands of business leadership in school leadership. They find much of their present responsibilities resting in finance, human resources, and legal work. The breadth and depth of the whole organization led several of them to question whether business leadership training would have been or has been more beneficial for them than school leadership training. Either way, they articulated clear need for training, support, and experience in leadership.

Educational Leadership - Training, Support, and Experience

Seven superintendents spoke clearly about their families influencing them to go into leadership and even encouragement to lead by parents early in their lives, by colleagues in their schools, or by spouses later in their lives. They also talked about their work ethic within leadership being a family trait. It was important and impactful to these superintendents that they were pushed to lead by others during their lives. One superintendent spoke of his father encouraging him to go into business but not to go into teaching nor to lead in education; however, this superintendent went into teaching and Christian school leadership anyway.

All eight superintendents mentioned their training for school leadership and specifically Christian school leadership because I asked them questions about this training; however, their responses pointed to the significant impact leadership training had on them. I will describe their training and their opinions of that training's effectiveness for their leadership. They spoke of their formal and informal training.

Beginning with their bachelor's degrees, seven superintendents have degrees in elementary education or degrees in a specific area of study supported by training to teach middle and high school. One had a bachelor's degree in an unrelated field and no training in education. Six superintendents have master's degrees in educational leadership or some similar equivalent. One of these six is pursuing a master's degree in business administration because of his interest in getting more business leadership training for his role as superintendent. Two of the superintendents do not have master's degrees in any field; however, one of them has received extensive university leadership training. One has a doctorate in educational leadership and organization studies.

Those with a master's degree in educational leadership found that earning one was necessary, giving credibility to earn their position as school leader. They also, in varying degrees, spoke positively about the experience of earning their master's degree, particularly when they were involved in a cohort model where they progressed through the courses together as a group. Those without master's degrees were confident in their leadership, but did share a few times that they did not have it, showing some concern or uncertainty about it.

Five superintendents had attended the Van Lunen Center and found it to be valuable, helping them improve and grow in their leadership, particularly because of the work that they did that was applicable to their present leadership and because of the cohort model. The Van Lunen Center, according to their website, "exists to provide world-class executive management education essential to the future of schools based on the historic Christian faith." One superintendent had also participated in Christian Schools International's Educators Leadership Development Institute (ELDI) and Principals Development Institute (PDI), both of which gave confidence in leadership but were also seen as a credibility "hoop to jump through."

Other formal training they spoke of were the conventions, conferences, workshops, professional development, and seminars that they had attended over the years specifically for administrators or for educators in general. These formal opportunities were beneficial for these superintendents, allowing them to build relationships with leaders from other schools, build capacity in themselves as leaders, gain one or two ideas that are inspiring and helpful, and show people from their schools what is valuable to learn.

Overall, these superintendents' opinions on formal leadership training such as degrees, conferences, and certifications varied greatly, depending on the person and the training. Davelaar commented, "I pursued a master's in educational leadership... I would say that the value of those

classes has been marginal.” To the other end of the spectrum, Paschal was positive about his learning, “After I got my master’s degree, which was great in terms of getting me to where I am... that was sort of the impetus and what it did for me... also inspired me to never stop learning.” Regardless of their opinions, the formal leadership certainly gave credibility, confidence, and content to each of these superintendents. It seems that their informal training or learning did even more for them.

When I asked the superintendents about their informal learning and training opportunities, they spoke about their relationships with other leaders, their family members who were leaders, mentors, and coaches. They also spoke plainly about being self-taught by reading, discussing, trying, and observing. These all clearly affected the effectiveness of their leadership.

One area of learning for them was through leadership relationships with other superintendents or other leaders, networking with them. Some spoke specifically about Christian leadership on the vision and mission for the school for themselves. Others spoke of the impact of one on one relationships with other leaders outside of school, aligning themselves with good leaders such as local business leaders, pastors, or school board members. Several superintendents spoke of following people who are doing innovative things, which then helped the superintendents bring innovation to their schools. In this same context of learning from other leaders, five superintendents talked about their practice of watching people. Michaels spoke of this:

If I’m around a successful person, I really try to draw a profile of that person in my mind. I try to mimic some of the things that I think weave in nicely with my role... I’d like to think that I’m learning something new... I genuinely try to.

These superintendents emulate other leaders in order to learn and be more effective. This seemed to be part of their living and leading with others.

Six superintendents mentioned mentoring extensively, and the other two spoke of significant relationships with leaders who influenced them. The mentor/mentee relationship was marked by a context where the superintendent was the mentee and someone else was the mentor, from family members, graduate school cohort members, fellow church members, other school leaders, to hired coaches. All of these relationships are marked as symbiotic, but the mentor was someone with more experience, training, effectiveness, or wisdom who could challenge the superintendents, modeling and supporting in leadership but not necessarily Christian educational leadership. These mentoring relationships involved regular, planned meetings. A few of the superintendents were mentoring others as part of succession planning in their schools.

A few superintendents had worked with an executive coach, which their boards supported in order to improve areas of weakness, which was, as an example, fundraising for one of the superintendents. Either way, these superintendents learned from a mentor or executive coach, and it shows a desire to learn informally and independently but deliberately.

They did push themselves to learn independently. They all spoke of being self-taught, being life-long learners, and learning every day. Most superintendents spoke of doing this through reading books (even naming specific books), articles, and blogs, but they went further than just reading. Several tried to apply what they had read to their present context. Paschal explains it this way: “I would read it and just think how would this fit with what we're doing.” This reading leads to flourishing for these superintendents, their staff, and their schools.

They also spoke of continuous training where the school board has invested in them as leaders, but the superintendents saw the value in the learning and participated in it. Paschal, who

spoke of being older and experienced, also spoke of still needing more training for the position. This training could be from reading, taking courses, listening to others and learning from them, but also superintendents observing and exposing themselves to good leadership. Tanner explains:

I mean, I caught it from watching this guy. He didn't sit me down and say, "Well here's what you do." I just watched what he did on an ongoing basis, what he did with me, what he did with my colleagues, how he conducted himself in meetings, how he conducted himself with clients, and I learned a tremendous amount from him. So that sort of mentor-mentee role that particular gentleman played was hugely important.

Leaders learn from their experiences, from reading, from watching others, but only if these leaders are paying attention and reflect on this learning.

All eight superintendents voiced the importance of learning through leadership experience. Leading for them is part of living, trying, commitment, and passion. This on the job experience is valuable and necessary to them, and these are some of the thoughts as to how and why:

- To more deeply understand, support, and counsel people, leaders need to lead and counsel others. One superintendent wished he had a psychology degree for this part of his leadership.
- To be comfortable being uncomfortable in leadership. There will always be challenges and experiences that create discomfort for leaders from which to learn.
- To learn in order to lead on the job, needing courses and reading to support their leading.
- To learn so that he can prove his leadership, bringing value considering his age and experience.

Additionally, the superintendents also learned from working with other schools and watching their school leaders in order to learn to lead better through their innovation. One superintendent thought this arrangement should be reciprocal: visit schools but have their staff visit his school in order to receive and give support and improve education. This learning, whether formal or informal, gives strong evidence to the deep desire for these superintendents to lead and grow in their leadership.

A Desire to Lead and Grow in Leadership

All eight superintendents showed a deep desire and passion to lead in Christian education and have had opportunities to lead. These leadership opportunities have been rewarding and beneficial, and they have been challenging and taxing. Nonetheless, their leadership passion and commitment modeled strength and perseverance in their roles.

These superintendents expressed and lived a desire, passion, commitment, and personal satisfaction in their leadership in Christian education. They shared about their convictions, imagination, and gumption to lead when and where needed in education:

- Templeton shared it this way: “I saw myself... being in a position where I could influence and impact the profession... So I always knew... that I wanted to seek a position that would allow me to do something similar.”
- Wolcott shares her passions and challenges: “[Teachers] want your 100% attention and that's really important to people. And sometimes that gets really hard... energy-wise and attention-wise... I also love that. I also really enjoy it.”
- Michaels adds to the passion: “Why I'm in administration – I started to think, this would be more rewarding, I would find this more fulfilling. The three schools I've been at have been an extension of my home.”

These quotes and comments are examples of superintendents leading because they have the gumption to do it, the desire to do it, and passion to do it.

Within this passion and desire, they also had a natural ability for leadership, even a knack for it. All expressed having leadership roles throughout their lives even before getting into education or educational leadership. Their self-awareness and understanding of their abilities led them to lead, but they also saw the opportunity to lead as an act of service or following for others. These superintendents deliberately accepted or pursued leadership opportunities when they were offered or available. Some were willing to move to other areas or schools in order to be able to lead in Christian education. Accepting or pursuing leadership roles is evidence to their natural ability to lead as well as their passion for it using their strengths.

These superintendents articulated a focus on their strengths, yet were humble and honest about their weaknesses or challenges. Diez talks about his weaknesses: “These are my core weaknesses and because I lead who I am, I need to actually be constantly aware of them and working on them so they have less and less impact on my school.” However, he and others supported a leadership model that capitalized on everyone’s strengths in order to minimize the challenges or weaknesses within each individual. They argued that we need everyone’s gifts in order to be successful.

Each superintendent also shared their self-confidence, character, and competence as Christian school leaders, which supported their passion and effectiveness. Davelaar spoke of his faith in God, knowledge, and skills. Jacox had a humble love for self that supported his love for leading. Michaels knew he could lead and had the confidence to back it. Paschal led by example, was relentless, and set the standard for his school. Templeton saw his wisdom that had come

with age and maturity. These superintendents and the others were confident in their character and competence. There are certainly benefits and blessings from this leadership.

The superintendents shared the benefits they received from and saw in their Christian school leadership passions and efforts. First, their leadership supported others and gave them hopes and opportunities to serve which was reciprocated giving the superintendents support and opportunities to serve. Leadership speaks into people, and people follow good leadership, so we need to lead by example, according to Paschal. This leads to flourishing for the leader and flourishing for the followers.

Superintendents are concerned with others' flourishing and their own flourishing, supporting people and making people look great. These superintendents use their skills to support others and their skills within the details and the larger vision of the organization. This gets the superintendents involved in every aspect of the organization in one way or another – teaching, finances, hiring, driving bus, or chaperoning. These superintendents provide support for the flourishing of others on staff or for the school itself, whether that is time, encouragement, or resources. Jacox articulated this notion clearly:

It's interesting in my job description..., one of the things that it says is, "The superintendent is only as successful in as much as the school is successful. Any success the school has on any front means the superintendent is successful." So I think about that often: that it's not about me, it's about the school.

So the blessings and benefits of superintendent leadership come from the investment and support that the superintendent gives and then receives. Paschal explains, "They want to see me flourish. And they want to be put in situations where they can flourish as well." Therefore, this flourishing is supported by effort and authority, but also has a cost to leaders.

The cost of leadership comes from or within the benefits or blessings of leadership. Because there is leadership – risk, opportunities, challenges, and decisions to be made, these superintendents talked about the effects of sin in their leadership in their schools and in their staff. There were disappointments, struggles, loneliness, and conflicts.

Interestingly, these superintendents attributed some of these costs to their own leadership deficiencies, shortcomings, ego, and uncertainty. Conversely, some of the costs of leadership fell on others. Diez claimed, “We’re fully human, right? All the qualities of leadership, yeah that’s great. But we’re actually a bunch of schmucks.” Superintendents lead with their strengths but they have their weaknesses. Uncertainty is certainly an issue in leadership, as Wolcott shared, describing how hard it is to know if she is actually effective as a superintendent. This uncertainty goes further and deeper because of the variety of opinions on effective leadership from people within a Christian school; Templeton spoke about that challenge. Jacox pushed this point further by sharing about the exaggerated expectations of leaders on leaders. All of these costs rest on the effects of sin, as summarized by the shortcomings of people and the organizations in which they serve.

Additionally, there are the extrinsic threats to Christian schools that several superintendents mentioned:

- Financial: pension problems, cost of tuition, donor funding
- Personnel: shortage of leadership candidates
- Competition: other schools competing for students

While these are some of the reasons for the challenges superintendents face, the effects of these challenges on the superintendents were significant.

There is the emotional toll. Several of the superintendents commented that leadership depletes energy because of the challenges, difficulties, even tragedies that they had to navigate. Additionally, negative feedback on decisions or vision contributes to the emotional toll. Interestingly, Tanner, who had been a leader in business found educational leadership more challenging: “Leading a Christian school is harder than leading a business organization.” Some of superintendents lead in relatively small, close-knit communities, and one of the leaders spoke of the challenges that come with leading in that context. Everyone involved with the Christian school lives in the community, goes to church in the community, and shops in the community, so it is challenging to lead in that context. Davelaar described the cost, the emotional toll, to the point that he was using a counselor to work through the emotional struggle. There is an emotional toll.

There is the loneliness. Being a superintendent in a Christian school is lonely. Six of the eight superintendents made some comment about this. Diez, in a light-hearted way, made the point: “It was back in those years when people liked us, right?, when we were teachers.” However, there is a challenge to this loneliness that takes its toll on them. Several articulated the need for personal contact with people; they needed supportive relationships, some type of personal support system. This loneliness comes from the leadership level of the position, according to Davelaar: “You have to recognize it is gonna get lonelier when you go into a role like this.” This loneliness comes from the level of leadership, people’s perceptions and expectations of leaders, and the confidentiality that is expected of leaders. This confidentiality encourages superintendents not to talk about the issues with which they are dealing with other people except the people they are dealing with and possibly the board or their mentor. This isolates the superintendents.

There are the hard, crucial conversations. According to the superintendents, these most often revolve around conflict management within the school system or personnel management, finding fit for staff, as earlier described. These conversations are challenging because these superintendents were talking about difficult topics with staff, board members, students, parents, donors, or community members: closing a campus, firing an employee, staff accountability and fit, and student discipline. People struggles are challenging because these superintendents were responsible for effecting change in people's lives, involving crucial conversations where things do not always work out well with people.

There is the challenge of finding a work/life balance. Five superintendents specifically spoke about the challenge they had in keeping their work life balanced within their entire lives. They spoke of working too hard, trying to outwork others, exhaustion from over-working and a lack of self-care, loneliness, the never-ending work, and the pressure to perform. This pressure seemed to drive them to struggle with the balance. It also seemed that there was a competitive spirit in the superintendents, wanting to win this leadership challenge. Michaels explained this:

I don't want to be the guy that starts to slow down and everybody is saying the same thing, "When's this guy gonna retire?" ... And so I want to finish strong. I want to have energy in my work, but that's a challenge because, if I fast forward 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, will I have the energy, if the Lord gives me time, will I have the energy to do what I'm doing now? It frightens me a little bit... It's just the amount of energy that you have to spend to do this job well.

This comment shows the passion, energy, concern, and competition that Michaels and others shared. While this is positive, it is also concerning. The work and life demands get out of

balance. Diez talked about an exhausting, stressful situation in his school and how it affected and encroached on his personal life. There is a cost to this level of leadership.

Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School

The benefits and costs of leadership for these superintendents came from a focus on excellence and continuous improvement, and making progress on both. Excellence is doing things as well as possible in the time allotted. Continuous improvement focuses on making things better than they were before, always doing this and never allowing complacency. Each of the eight superintendents advocated for excellence in their schools and for continuous improvement, supporting the mission and vision to serve others and God.

Excellence, Improvement, and Continuous Improvement

Excellence is doing things well, and these superintendents used their leadership to encourage others to excellence. All eight spoke about excellence in their leadership and in their schools. They mentioned a variety of areas and things about excellence: leading well, doing a good job, leading by example with excellence, remembering the little things too, getting more accomplished, developing people, pursuing our best instead of being nice, and excellence is a journey. Michaels shared the importance of faith and excellence working together in Christian education to educate and minister to kids. Having worked in public schools, Templeton had concerns with the level of professionalism or excellence in Christian schools. He felt his school was lacking excellence and needed to model it for the staff. He continued, “I don't believe that God calls us to be average...I don't think that we should expect average graduates.” We have to be excellent for God’s glory. Tanner pushes this, “I'm called to do my best and that's what our students need to learn. They need to learn excellence... and they need to be convinced that they

should be applying that in every area of their lives.” Excellence is accomplished through continuous improvement.

Continuous improvement is the focus of always getting better. These superintendents all spoke about the concept of improving in a variety of ways but clearly articulated the need to improve. Their point was to get better, to improve but not just change for the sake of changing, but to address areas of needed improvement. Improvement also had to be measured and proven with data or research in order to show progress. It is also time consuming. Improvement also should originate from the strategic plan moving a school, its people, and its leader toward wholeness, according to Diez.

Superintendents mentioned several improvement areas: technology, teacher pedagogy, school branding, and personnel. These projects kept superintendents focused and motivated. Further, Tanner shared the famous quote about never wasting a good crisis, using it to see the need for improvement and change.

Growth Mindset with Humility

This effort and focus on change and improvement seems to require a growth mindset from humble leaders. All of the superintendents spoke of trying things, taking risks, learning from mistakes, and always leading through it. Several used the phrase “commit to try” when referring to effective leadership for excellence and growth. Michaels gave advice: “Another effective practice I found in education is to fail quickly, but fall forward. So with my leadership team, we fail quite a bit. If we never failed, we're not taking any risks.” He humorously added another line that supports this: ““If you gotta eat @\$!*, don't nibble. Do it quickly.” This trying, this growth mindset connected to hard work, effort, and grit for these superintendents. Several

superintendents also shared impatience they felt when improvements did not happen as quickly as they had thought because of unforeseen reactions, bureaucracy, or challenges.

Several of the superintendents shared their problem-solving efforts and challenges as they pursued excellence and growth. The optimism and growth mindset continued as they talked of the problems, learned from them, and then tried again. Templeton shared that there will always be problems to solve. Tanner added to this: “You're punching through in one place, you're punching through in another place, you're lagging someplace else. As long as you're punching through someplace, you're making progress.” He added that he has experienced times when his integrity was questioned because of these challenges. However, several shared their understanding that they would never solve all the problems but need to celebrate the victories.

The challenges of problem solving and yet the optimism that came with a growth mindset left some of these superintendents sharing about their strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, Diez shared his mindset to work on both his strengths and weaknesses in order to achieve wholeness for his school but also himself. Others spoke of the exaggerated expectations placed on superintendents leaving them convinced they are not good enough, but still trying and working toward improvement and change.

Change Management and Theory

Change was a vital part of this conversation and theme as superintendents talked about their practices of excellence and growth. They spoke clearly about change, why change, who leads the change, and how to manage change. Jacox, as the change agent, promoted change or improvement for God for students. This was his reason – he wanted to honor and serve God so he could more richly honor and serve his students through their Christian education. This is quite

compelling and it needs to be for the staff, school board, and community. Change has to be managed and navigated well.

Several of the superintendents emphasized change management. They spoke about knowing why they needed to change in their schools, but they also spoke about how, the direction, and the pace of change. They were excited and passionate about the change when it went quickly and effective and frustrated and impatient with the bureaucracy of schools that can slow change. Change in their schools came about through strategic and careful planning seemingly following change theory. Several referenced getting early adopters on board the change in order to make the change happen, earning their trust and the trust of others in order to gain momentum and speed for change. Others spoke of concerns they had with their own and staff complacency or even withdrawal from change, growth, and excellence.

They emphasized several areas where they were working on change in their schools, which arose from vision, strategy, or even crisis, reminding us never to waste a good one: diversity in student population, innovation in programs, classroom furniture, Teaching for Transformation (a Christian education instructional pedagogy), parts of school culture, entrepreneurial innovation, or organizational sustainability models. Most superintendents spoke about measuring these change efforts to ensure their progress and making the efforts and the change visible to staff and others effected.

School Success and Sustainability

School change focused on Christian education's success and sustainability, centering on student education but also organizational sustainability. A successful Christian school continues to change and improve so that the mission is delivered and lived out in ways that strengthen the school and therefore the mission. Several superintendents argued that leader longevity is critical

for change. If a superintendent serves in a school for a good amount of time, he or she can bring change more effectively. They were sure to point out that school success reveals or is connected to superintendent success, and this success, being the best, attracts people – students, staff, and donors. These bring stability and sustainability. Several superintendents stated that contracting and cutting programs would not produce sustainability; they had to grow, adjust, and learn in order to be successful and sustainable. This is effective leadership.

Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, Practices

The superintendents that I interviewed all spoke of specific skills necessary to lead effectively in Christian schools. These skills are listed, defined, and explained below. While some of these skills were not mentioned by many of the superintendents, I chose to list them here because of the relevance each skill had in their leadership and the strength by which they spoke of them.

Prioritize, Organize, and Manage Their Work

Five superintendents spoke of the need to prioritize, manage their time, and organize their work as well as the discipline and organization necessary to get that work accomplished. Being organized also brought the notion of being prepared for things into the discussion. They spoke in general terms about their work, not clearly referencing either daily tasks or strategic planning projects. A few spoke about the problems that come from not being organized or prioritizing well causing leadership stress, burnout, and messy leadership.

Six of the eight superintendents spoke about delegating as a significant skill in school leadership. Delegating in this context seemed to refer to the skill of entrusting and empowering someone with a project, task, or responsibility because they have the skill, job description, and

desire to do the project. It seemed that the superintendents who mentioned delegating were referring to delegating to some member of their administration team.

Communication

Effective communication was another key leadership skill that seven of the eight superintendents mentioned. They shared the need to communicate effectively in order to lead successfully in several ways:

- Communicate in a variety of ways using a variety of methods, being transparent and vulnerable
- Actively and empathetically listen, be approachable; understand others then be understood
- Communicate in ways that inspire and motivate others through mission and vision and communicate through critical conversations where the superintendent has concerns
- Get help communicating from others, advising how the superintendent should do it

The superintendents promoted these four areas of communication as varied ways to communicate effectively in leadership.

Accessible, Visible, Present, and Approachable

Six of the eight superintendents recommended and practiced being accessible, visible, present, and approachable for their board, administration team, staff, families, and community.

Accessibility and visibility refer to things like having their office door open, keeping parts of their schedule flexible, and being present and involved in events, buildings, and public.

Approachability refers to the presentation, posture, and personality of the superintendent, being sure people feel as though they can approach the superintendent.

Practice Self-care

Seven of the eight superintendents practice or encouraged the practice of self-care and four encouraged self-awareness. Self-care is the practice of living a balanced work and personal life, caring for self physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. One superintendent described his need for Sabbath, for rest. Another was burned out, exhausted, lacked emotional and intellectual energy, and was sleep deprived, advocating for better balance even within the interview. Another superintendent is a cancer survivor and supported a newfound priority in caring for self and finding joy in other things besides work. Self-awareness was referred to as being conscious of one's personality and its impact or effect on others. Self-awareness also brings wholeness for an individual and for relationships.

Data-driven Action

Four superintendents spoke of using data to direct and drive their actions and decisions. They articulated that these data come from several areas of the school and are found in a variety of ways:

- Education data: student test scores, student enrollment
- Financial data: budgets, fundraising goals, donor goals, financials
- Strategic data: progress on the strategic plan using some tool to measure it
- Satisfaction data: staff, student, and parent surveys

Michaels stated his view on using data:

I've seen that quote that says, "In God we trust; all others bring data." We try to measure everything, and we try to keep score. So whether it be our financials, whether it be our enrollment, whether it be our standardized test scores, we compare that not only to previous years, but we compare that to even previous administrations.

He shares a strong view and passion for using data to improve.

Evaluate Staff

Six superintendents claim that in order to be effective, they have to train, hold accountable, and evaluate their staff. Successful superintendents have to lead by holding staff accountable according to their job descriptions and evaluating their work. Additionally, staff need this and are expecting this from superintendents and the administration team. Staff training is another piece to this accountability and evaluation that shows staff what is expected, modeling good teaching or work in other areas.

Working Hard

Four superintendents spoke of working hard – putting the hours in to leadership in Christian schools. They claimed this was necessary for a couple reasons:

- School leadership takes a lot of hard work by superintendents and everyone else involved.
- Leading by example is important; superintendents need to model what they expect but also what is healthy and realistic.

Wolcott states this clearly, “I still work plenty hard, but I'm not gonna cross that line and kill myself because nobody else was gonna do it. And that's good.” She supports hard work and yet an appropriate life balance.

Applying Theory to Themes

The interviews with eight superintendents of Christian schools resulted in seven themes of effective leadership practices. Through their hard work, training, and experience, we can learn how to lead more effectively in life and in Christian education. These seven themes align with

the leadership theories discussed in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2, which were Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership.

Theory to Theme: Faith in Jesus and Calling from Jesus

There are several connections to the theories of eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership in the theme, faith in Jesus and calling from Jesus.

- Covey's first habit of effective people encourages us to be proactive. I see the connections to being proactive in the spiritual attributes that these superintendents promoted. They spoke of the following spiritual attributes: being trustworthy, humble, patient, gracious, grateful, and reflective. Living by these spiritual attributes in life and leadership is a proactive posture; however, it is also necessarily reactive when put in situations where leaders need to react to a person's request or accusation.
- Covey's second habit calls us to "begin with the end in mind." Within this theme from successful superintendents, there is a connection from God's calling to leadership for these leaders to their work, their vocation. They shared what they are doing through their personal faith in God as their calling; they are beginning with the end in mind: religious leadership as superintendents in Christian schools.
- Covey's fourth habit, think win/win, connects well when serving others and working with others on a solution. In service, these superintendents collaborate with others to find solutions that are mutually beneficial for all involved.
- Covey's seventh habit to sharpen the saw is referenced by the superintendents through their regular spiritual practices, devotions, prayer, and worship. They also spoke of these spiritual attributes for leadership: trustworthy, humble, patient, gracious, grateful, and reflective.

- In Covey's eighth habit where he encourages us to find our voice and help others find theirs, these superintendents' voices rest in God's calling to lead, helping others find and fulfill their calling within the school. This is their voice. They are supporting their spiritual and professional voices, strengths, talents, and abilities.
- The theory of servant leadership focuses on serving, listening, accepting, and empathizing with people. The superintendents, as religious leaders, are serving and shepherding others, empowering and developing their staff. There is interpersonal acceptance for a greater good, for flourishing. This servant leadership provides direction for the school, including the employees work, calling, and service. Additionally, the attributes of a servant that the superintendents shared, being trustworthy, humble, patient, gracious, grateful, and reflective, all support the theory of servant leadership.
- Transformational leadership supports servant leadership because it is inspiring, supportive, and empowering for everyone under its influence. The spiritual attributes shared by the superintendents of being trustworthy, humble, patient, gracious, grateful, and reflective are also transformational for the recipient but also the giver of these attributes.

These theories support the effective leadership theme that these eight superintendents articulated about their faith in Jesus and his calling for their life's work.

Theory to Theme: Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning

There are several connections to the theories of Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership in this theme from successful superintendents that focuses Christian schools on mission, vision, and strategic planning.

- Covey's first habit of being proactive supports the school focus on mission, vision, and strategic planning by superintendents. In order to be proactive rather than reactive schools, their leadership, their staff, and their communities need to focus proactively in order to avoid having to be reactive.
- Covey's second habit to begin with the end in mind refers directly to schools having a mission, vision, and strategic plan. When schools do this and their superintendents act on them, this is their "end." This is what they are after.
- Covey's sixth habit calls us to synergize with others to create better things. When people in schools unite around its mission, vision, and strategic plan, which creates the union and allows people to synergize around Christian education.
- Covey's eighth habit encourages people to find their voice and help others find theirs. The mission, vision, and strategic plan of Christian schools is the voice of leadership and the stakeholders of each school. This is what they are committing to in order to educate children in Christ, giving all involved a voice.
- The mission, vision, and strategic plan of any Christian school can certainly provide the material for the superintendent to be a transformational leader. It is the motivational factor for people if they are actually committed to Christian education, giving the leader the material and opportunity to empower, inspire, and bring vision to the community of the Christian school.

These theories support the effective leadership theme that these eight superintendents articulated about their commitment to the mission and vision of Christian schools and the strategic plan used to move their schools forward.

Theory to Theme: Engaging in Relationships

There are several connections to the theories of Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership in this theme from successful superintendents that stresses the importance of engaging in relationships with staff, students, parents, and the community as well as building or sustaining a relational culture.

- Covey's first habit encourages people to be proactive. Broadly, the theme focusing on relationships is proactive as well in that it centers leadership on relationships, which builds trust and united vision for Christian schools. If this strong relationship is in place, then there will be a proactive culture and direction for the school.
- Covey's fourth habit is to strive to make mutually beneficial decisions, win/wins. The superintendents spoke often of the blessings and challenges of relationships, particularly with staff members, in their schools. While not all decisions or visions are positive for everyone involved, these superintendents certainly tried for the win/win; however, it was evident that the leader's goal is to win for the school and its mission. While this may not always appear to be a win for people because they were disciplined or fired, these challenges were pursued to support the school.
- Covey's fifth habit shares that effective people try to understand others first and then to be understood. The eight superintendents shared this perspective several times within this theme focused on relationships; however, as mentioned earlier, the mission and vision of their schools came first. Therefore, these relationships and conversations with school stakeholders may have given the leader some staff understanding; it ultimately supported a greater understanding of the school mission and vision.

- Covey's sixth habit focuses on synergy between people and within organizations. The superintendents clearly articulated their understanding of this in their schools and the value it brings when all stakeholders are synergistically pulling in the same direction for the mission and vision of the school.
- Covey's eighth habit encourages effective people to find their voice and then to help others find theirs. This is part of being in relationships, considering the whole person, their gifting and calling, and challenging them to know and use their voice, in this case, for the mission of Christian education.
- Servant leadership focuses on people. This theme from the superintendents focuses on people within or connected to their schools. They were interested in supporting people and challenging people, particularly their staff members. This stemmed from what appeared to be empathetic, trusting relationships with staff for their flourishing so students would flourish so the school would flourish. The superintendents were leading to serve God and others.
- Transformational leadership inspires and empowers others through the leader's vision casting and charisma. This was evident but not overt in the conversations I had with the superintendents. Nonetheless, leadership centered on relationship is transformational since it builds trust, synergy, and momentum for the mission and vision of the schools.

These theories support the effective leadership theme that these eight superintendents articulated about the significance of relationships with the board, staff, students, parents, and community.

Theory to Theme: Leadership with the board and administration

There are several connections to the theories of Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership in this theme from successful superintendents' leadership with the school board and administration team. The superintendents described leading and serving in the midst of these two groups – the board as leading authority and the administration team as leaders and managers within the daily operations of the schools.

- Covey's first habit encourages people to be proactive. The board, superintendent, and administration team's working, highly functioning relationship is proactive. Their unity as groups around the mission of Christian education as well as the daily activities supporting that mission is proactive; it is leadership for them to be united and proactive.
- Covey's second habit focuses on the mission and vision of Christian schools because, as earlier described, he promotes beginning with the end in mind. When the school board, superintendent, and administration team are in a long, trusted, focused relationship around the mission of Christian education, they are leading with the end goal in mind.
- Covey's third habit shares that effective leaders put first things first in their work. In superintendent leadership a primary work priority is certainly to be in shared leadership with the school board first and the administration team next. With focus on the Christian school mission, the effort, work, and relationship between board and administration has to be the first thing.
- Covey's sixth habit to synergize focuses on uniting people, organizations, or things in order to create something better together than they could alone. This theory certainly

- applies to the superintendent, board, and administration team as a group where their working together builds a synergy for the mission and effectiveness of Christian schools.
- Covey's eighth habit encourages effective people to find their voice and then to help others find theirs. This is part of being in leadership with the school board and administration team certainly sharpens everyone's voice within schools. Through the work and leadership of the superintendent, the board helps him or her find their voice but also refines their voice in leadership, mission, and vision. Similarly, the administration team finds their individual voices and collective voice but also encourages and shapes the voice of the superintendent.
 - Four superintendents spoke of servant leadership as a focus of their leadership style within the context of leadership in Christian schools with and for the board and administration team. Servant leadership supports, encourages, and serves others for their flourishing and really for the flourishing of the schools.
 - Related to servant leadership, three superintendents spoke of transformational leadership using language like inspirational, vision, and charisma to describe their effective leadership style. While not mentioned by the majority, it certainly is worth mentioning here in support of transformational leadership as a theory that supports Christian education leadership.

These theories support the effective leadership theme that these eight superintendents articulated regarding the shared leadership that the superintendents had with their boards and administration team.

Theory to Theme: Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership

There are several connections to the theories of Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership in this theme from successful superintendents regarding superintendents' gifting and education as leaders but also their passion for Christian education leadership. The superintendents connected their leadership to these theories.

- Covey's first habit of effective people is to be proactive. All eight superintendents shared their proactive approach bringing them to the position of superintendent. Their careers leading up to being a superintendent, their training, and their passions all present a proactive approach to leadership as they follow God's call to lead in this way.
- Covey's second habit encourages people to begin with the end in mind. These superintendents, through their gifting, training, and passions, are leaders because they had the end in mind – to lead in Christian education serving God and man through their leadership.
- Covey's seventh habit, sharpening the saw, focuses on people caring for themselves spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially. Within their growth, learning, and passion for leadership, these superintendents spoke of a deep need for work/life balance that is healthy, sustaining, and renewing for them. This sharpens their "saw."
- Covey's eighth habit around voice for self and voice for others connects well to this theme. These superintendents have found their voice, being called to lead in schools through their careers, training, and passion for leadership, Christian education, and ultimately for God.

- Neither servant nor transformational leadership theories connected to the superintendents' voices around their career, learning, growth, and passion for leadership. However, they were clear in articulating support of these theories in other themes as described elsewhere.

These theories support the effective leadership theme that these eight superintendents articulated about their gifting, education, and passion for leadership in Christian education.

Theory to Theme: Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School

There are several connections to the theories of Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership in this theme from successful superintendents focused on growth and excellence in and for Christian schools.

- Covey's first habit was supported by the superintendents' theme where they supported pursuing growth and excellence in and for schools. If this is the goal then decisions and actions that follow are going to be proactive, for the most part. This growth and excellence focus becomes the proactive action of the superintendent; this is continuous improvement with a growth mindset.
- Covey's second habit, to begin with the end in mind, is also supported by the superintendents' theme of growth and excellence. These support the mission of the school, which is the main thing; however, excellence and growth support the effectiveness of the mission of schools. This becomes part of schools' main thing, which brings success and provides sustainability for the schools.
- Covey's fourth habit becomes a win/win for schools and the people associated with them as these superintendents pursue excellence and growth in and for their schools.

If this mindset is truly the center of their leadership, then most, even all, will experience mutually beneficial decisions for each and for all.

- Covey's sixth habit is supported by the pursuit of growth and excellence. Synergy comes from the people who come together around this growth and excellence. There is unification in the pursuit of better.
- Covey's eighth habit is reinforced by the excellence and growth that the superintendents were pursuing. This was clearly the voice of the superintendents and they influenced their schools with that voice, helping some find that voice.
- This pursuit of growth and excellence in schools ultimately enhances the mission of Christian schools to serve God and to educate students. Schools are improving because superintendents are serving others with their focus of growth and excellence through servant leadership.
- Growth and excellence in Christian education is transformational leadership; it is a compelling and inspiring direction for schools but really for the people in the schools. They are inspired, transformed really, by growth and excellence.

These theories support the effective leadership theme that these eight superintendents articulated supporting growth and excellence for their Christian schools.

Theory to Theme: Leadership Skills

There are several connections to the theories of Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership in this theme from successful superintendents where they practice effective leadership skills as habits, tasks, or practices. This is the list of the skills that they described as being important: prioritize, organize, and manage their work;

communication; be accessible, visible, present, and approachable; practice self-care; take data-driven action; evaluate staff; and work hard.

- Covey’s first habit is completely reinforced by these specific leadership skills. When these skills are practiced, the leader is being proactive.
- Covey’s third habit is one of the skills that the superintendents spoke of – prioritizing and managing their work. This is “putting first things first.”
- Covey’s seventh habit is to sharpen the saw, and this relates to the skills of self-care. Leaders who take care of themselves through rest, exercise, and appropriate workloads are practicing self-care.

These theories support the effective leadership theme that these eight superintendents articulated about leadership skills.

Conclusion

Each of these theories connects to the themes that the eight superintendents shared and evidenced in their leadership in Christian schools. This is a list of the theories and the leadership themes connected to them:

- Covey’s first habit: themes one through seven
- Covey’s second habit: themes one, two, four, five, and six
- Covey’s third habit: themes four and seven
- Covey’s fourth habit: themes one, three, and six
- Covey’s fifth habit: theme three
- Covey’s sixth habit: themes two, three, four, and six
- Covey’s seventh habit: themes one, five, and seven
- Covey’s eighth habit: themes one, two, three, four, five, and six

- Servant Leadership: themes one, three, four, and six
- Transformational Leadership: themes one, two, three, four, and six

These theoretical connections and support provide the basis for the seven themes that these eight superintendents shared about effective leadership practices in and for their Christian schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a Christian school superintendent intent on learning and growing in my work, I have been interested in learning how other superintendents lead. As a result, I examined the perspectives and effective practices of eight Christian school superintendents. The directors of three Christian school support organizations viewed these eight superintendents as successful in schools where they had led for four years or more. In this final chapter, I draw conclusions from the study, summarize and discuss the implications of my study, and make several recommendations. I also make recommendations for further research. I then share my thoughts as a culmination of the study.

This qualitative case study investigated the research question: What are the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents associated with growth and improvement in CSI schools' operations and student learning? I interviewed eight superintendents who uniquely expressed their effective practices and experiences in Christian school leadership, and I compiled their collective perspectives and experiences into seven themes of leadership. These superintendents had at least four years of experience in their present school, and many of them had ten or more years at their school. All of these superintendents had between from five years in school leadership to over 25 years. While these superintendents certainly shared their own perspectives, they certainly articulated seven clear, collective themes of effective leadership for their successful schools through their interviewed responses and questionnaires.

Conclusions

Through this project, I have learned to be more confident in my own leadership, areas where I need to grow and improve, and opportunities I need to pursue. Additionally, being a superintendent in a Christian school is challenging and difficult work, yet it is rewarding,

meaningful work. I have learned to be more confident, to grow, and to expand by exploring the research question with the eight superintendents: What are the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents associated with growth and improvement in CSI schools' operations and student learning? As stated earlier, I found seven themes which I have described in detail in Chapter Four and certainly answer my research question. I will give an overview of each theme as well as the theoretical backing, giving evidence that my research question has been addressed.

Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership. The superintendents clearly articulated a faith in God that was growing in their personal and professional lives. They also felt called by God to lead in Christian schools, seeing themselves as servant leaders as shepherds for their schools. They also shared spiritual attributes that were vital for their effective, spiritual leadership. Theory supports this theme from Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, as described in Chapter Four.

Focus on Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning. The superintendents supported a focus on the mission and vision of their schools, which was enhanced and promoted by having an active strategic plan. The mission and vision of Christian schools focused on students and their challenging, faith-based education. The education had to be excellent and Christ-centered so that students would be empowered to leave school prepared to work and serve God in the world. Theory supports this theme from Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, as described in Chapter Four.

Engaging in Relationships. The superintendents found relationships to be important for their effective leadership. They focused on staff relationships but also students, parents, and community members. This effort establishes a relational culture which builds trust and effectiveness within the organization. Theory supports this theme from Covey's eight habits of

effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, as described in Chapter Four.

Superintendent Leadership with the Board and Administration Team. The superintendents spoke of effective, deep, and meaningful relationships with their administration team and with the school board, particularly individual board members. Along with the functioning relationship with administration and the board came a clear style of leadership for each superintendent that seemed to establish trust among them as they led staff and the organization. Theory supports this theme from Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, as described in Chapter Four.

Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership. All of the superintendents were gifted, educated, and passionate leaders who progressed through teaching or business careers into school leadership. They had received significant formal and informal training to their roles showing their desire to learn and grow in their leadership. Theory supports this theme from Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, as described in Chapter Four.

Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School. Excellence and continuous improvement were very important effective leadership practices for the superintendents. They certainly had growth mindsets and wanted to improve individually but wanted their schools to improve for God's and students' sakes, and they were humble about this. This was not about their leadership; it was about the mission of the school and the students, as they managed change in order to improve. Theory supports this theme from Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, as described in Chapter Four.

Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, and Practices. The superintendents had many leadership skills that they referred to and promoted, such as prioritizing the work, communicating, being approachable and available, practicing self-care, taking action based on data, evaluating their staff, and working hard. Theory supports this theme from Covey's eight habits of effective people, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, as described in Chapter Four.

These seven themes address the research question and give strong evidence to the effective leadership practices of Christian school superintendents. These themes are also supported by the literature and theories. Because of this, these themes serve as deep, guiding practices for superintendents leading in Christian schools.

Discussion of the Findings

This study is very important for our service to God and his Kingdom, for better Christian education, for better schools and the culture, and for better leadership. If school leaders improve, then staff improve, then the education improves, then students improve bringing their transforming influence to the world spreading the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To elaborate, the seven themes that have been revealed, described, substantiated, and summarized give constructive leadership direction to Christian schools. These seven themes are important then because they give something for school boards to measure and evaluate in their Christian school leadership. This evaluation and measurement can and should improve the leader who will then evaluate and measure their administration team, who will in turn do the same for their staff. These seven themes keep focus on the mission, vision, and leadership of Christian schools which are designed to support Christian families with quality, Christ-centered education for their children, our students. If the leaders are improving then the education is improving. This

also impacts organizational culture, staff, student, and parent morale, and organizational efficiencies. Again, if the school leader is growing, learning, and improving around these effective leadership practices, then everyone and everything within the school community should also be growing, learning, and improving, which builds and focuses the mission and vision of Christian education.

The following discussion shares the seven themes, giving a greater understanding of the practices and experiences of Christian school superintendents found through this collective case study. These superintendents proved to be leaders of leaders and followers of leaders within their schools and their communities. It was clear that they were respected leaders but avid learners too. The seven themes from this study provide valuable context for leadership practices and are well supported by the literature and theories described in Table 8. I compare the professional standards for educational leaders with the seven effective leadership practices or themes in order to show the complementary connections but also the differences between them.

Table 8

A Comparison between Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and Seven Effective Leadership Practices or Themes

Professional standards for educational leaders (PSEL) from NPBEA (formerly ISLLC); also NASSP	7 Effective Leadership Practices of Superintendents in Christian Schools
1. None	1. Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership
2. Mission, Vision, and Core Values	2. Focus on Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning
3. Ethics and Professional Norms	3. Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership
4. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	4. Engaging in Relationships
5. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	5. None
6. Community of Care and Support for Students	6. Engaging in Relationships
7. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	7. Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, and Practices.
8. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	8. Engaging in Relationships AND Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership

9. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	9. Engaging in Relationships
10. Operations and Management	10. Superintendent Leadership with the Board and Administration Team AND Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership AND Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, and Practices.
11. School Improvement	11. Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School AND Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, and Practices.

The comparison in Table 8 shows the connection to professional standards for educational leaders but also the unique practices or themes this study showed from the perspective and experiences of the eight superintendents. Two differences stand out:

- The professional standards for educational leaders does not seem to have any standards that draw similarities to the practice or theme of having a faith in God and His calling to leadership.
- None of the seven themes from the superintendents draw any correlation to the professional standard on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Additionally, when drawing the practices connection to the three theories, each theory is supported by the seven themes as listed and described in Chapter Four. These theoretical connections and support provide the basis for the seven themes that these eight superintendents shared about effective leadership practices in and for their Christian schools.

As part of this discussion, I now share what some of the literature showed about each of the seven themes in this study. While not a complete literature review, I provide several references supporting these themes through the literature.

Faith in God and His Calling to Leadership. This theme tells of leaders' faith in God as well as their faith in God's calling them to leadership in Christian schools. First, Christian

school leaders have a faith in God (Carman, 2009). Second, they believe God called them to school leadership, which was vital to their commitment to their work and is supported by the literature through several studies (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison and Allen, 2017; Schuttloffel, 2013). However, it is also important to note that there is literature that supports something similar to God's calling but not religious or spiritual for public or non-religious school leaders (Dantley, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005). This was evident in school leaders' understanding that their purpose in life was to lead and lead in schools.

Focus on Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning. The mission and vision of any school, whether Christian, private, or public, must be the center of all leadership, and the strategic plan gives action and direction to the mission and vision. The literature supports this theme. Authors like Forner et al., (2012), Kowalski (2006), Marzano et al. (2005), and Nettles & Herrington (2007) all advocated for this focus on mission, vision, and supporting leadership priorities, values, and norms in order to positively direct and lead schools. With leaders focused on the mission of the school, students will receive the intended education and participate in learning that supports them.

Engaging in Relationships. Relationships are essential for effective leadership in any school, and the literature supports this point, particularly between administration and staff (Marzano et al., 2005, Mosenthal et al., 2004; Nettles and Herrington, 2007). Additionally, school leaders must have relationships with their school families and the surrounding community in order to support and enhance student learning (Marzano et al., 2005; Mosenthal et al., 2004; Nettles & Herrington, 2007).

Superintendent Leadership with the Board and Administration Team. Danzerberger (1994) and Kowalski (2006) supported and emphasized the necessity of an effective and

functioning relationships between the board and the superintendent. In order for schools to function well, the school board and the superintendent have to work well together upholding the mission and supporting student learning. The same is true for the working relationships between the administrators and the superintendent who need to function as a team (West, 2011). The board, superintendent, and the administration team must all work together to effectively promote the mission and thus student learning.

Gifted, Educated, and Passionate about Leadership. Effective and successful superintendents are capable leaders, are passionate about leading, and are educated and trained in their leadership. Kowalski (2006) and Marzano et al. (2005) both support the PSEL: professional capacity of school personnel and the professional community for teachers and staff. Both of these standards consists of growth, learning, staffing placement, and training. While these standards focus on staff, the correlation is drawn between staff and school leaders enhancing their abilities in governance, leadership, and education.

Pursue Growth and Excellence in and for the School. School improvement and reform are popular discussion topics in education which seem to focus on school growth and excellence for student learning and flourishing. Dantley (2003), Forner et al. (2012), Kowalski (2006), Marzano et al. (2005), Powell (2018), and Sicconne (2012) had valuable information and research about school leadership, improvement, and reform. The superintendent has to lead and be deeply involved in the school reform effort within their school. The concept of continuous improvement is essential for schools to better fulfill their missions (Ash et al., 2013; Dantley, 2003; Horine, Frazier, & Edmister, 1998; Nettles & Herrington, 2007).

Practice Effective Leadership Skills – Habits, Tasks, and Practices. Effective leadership requires skills, practices, habits and tasks. The literature is full of examples from

communication skills to collaboration, from confidence to coaching staff, from school governance to classroom instruction (Baldwin, 2012; Kowalski, 2006; Meadows, 2007; Siccone, 2012; Williams, 2008). These researchers supported various skills necessary for leaders to lead effectively. The list of skills from my study – managing their work, communicating, accessibility, caring for themselves, taking action according to data, evaluating staff, and working hard – coincide with the skills listed from other studies that were listed above as well as Covey's (2004a, 2004b) theory on habits of effective people. The results of this study, as discussed in this section, have several implications.

Implications of the Results of this Study

There are implications that come from the results of this study. The implications of the seven themes connect to expectations for leaders in Christian education, school board governance, administration team leadership, and superintendent training. There are opportunities that stem from these implications that need to be explored.

Christian school superintendents should use these seven themes to guide their leadership, helping them guide their decisions, prioritize their work, and ultimately enhance the mission of Christian schools. Christian school leadership is challenging, difficult work as evidenced by this study. Following these seven themes as effective practices for these leaders will empower them and give them confidence in their leadership.

Additionally, Christian school boards should use these themes to support and set goals with their superintendent as well as to evaluate him or her. This would deepen the connection between the board and superintendent, improve the effectiveness of their leadership, and ultimately expand the mission work of their school – improving student learning. With the board and superintendent working together in these areas, schools will improve and grow.

In addition to the board and superintendent connection, the superintendents I interviewed had participated in many formal educational training scenarios, from university courses and degrees to conferences to management training programs, and they were valuable and helpful to the leader's growth. I suggest that these seven themes should be part of the education that they provide to Christian school leaders that are participating in the training and learning. Similar implications are true for future school leaders, particularly Christian school superintendents. These leader preparation programs could benefit from the results of this study by utilizing these seven themes to inform and encourage leaders in order to support and improve the mission of Christian schools and their students' learning.

Because of the implications of this study, I recommend several areas of change for Christian school leaders, particularly superintendents, in order to support, encourage, and empower them. The first area where I recommend change stems from the theme of faith in God and His call to superintendents to lead. While the eight superintendents that I interviewed knew they were called to lead, I recommend a change for schools that hire superintendents, the programs that train them, and leaders considering the superintendent role. All should utilize a "calling" process – some concrete ways to determine a leader's calling and gifting to become a school superintendent. Personality assessments, strengths analysis, spiritual gift inventories, and deeper interviewing of candidates could provide better insights into the placement of a candidate into superintendent leadership. I know many of these tools are used, but none of the superintendents that I interviewed referenced any of them. It is valuable to determine calling to the profession of being a Christian school superintendent but also calling to a specific Christian school.

A second area of change is related to the theme on superintendents being gifted, educated, and passionate about leadership. Specifically, the eight superintendents that I interviewed spoke highly of the mentor/mentee relationships of which they had been a part as well as any executive coaching they had received. A change could be that all superintendents and their administration team have mentors and also be mentors to others in order to be encouraged and supported and to encourage and support throughout their leadership.

A third area of change is within the theme of practicing effective leadership skills. I am specifically referring to two areas: prioritizing, organizing, and managing the work of a superintendent, and practicing self-care where there is a health work/life balance. There was a concerning trend that came from any talk about this theme: superintendents struggled, to the point of exhaustion and burn out, to keep a work/life balance, prioritizing their work and its demands on them. Superintendents, their school boards, and universities that provide training could establish basic metrics for work allocation and balance on hours worked so that school superintendents would have better guidance of what is reasonable in their leadership work.

Last, through all of this research, reading, interviewing, and coding, I believe leaders everywhere, but particularly Christian leaders, regardless of the organization, need to shift their focus to Covey's habits of highly effective people. His eight habits were reinforced by all of the leadership literature related to this theory (Collins, 2001; Duhigg, 2012; Kouzes and Posner (2012); Lencioni, 2012; Rath and Conchie, 2008; Sinek, 2009), all of the interview content, and all of experiences to be eight core practices of effective leadership habits, particularly when practiced in the posture of servant leadership. Covey's eight habits combined or blended with the seven themes from this case study makes a compelling vision and model for leadership in general but particularly in Christian schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

While the goal of this research project was accomplished, there are other ways to consider conducting the research in order to deepen the significance of the findings as well as to explore and ultimately find other data. I recommend the following actions in order to accomplish this, described in the following paragraphs.

I recommend more research on Christian school superintendents. A collective case study on superintendents from other Christian school organizations and/or denominations should be performed in order to compare the seven themes from this study to that study, enhancing the understanding and application of the themes and their resulting practices. Differences in effective leadership between Christian and public school leaders could also be researched through interviews, observation, and surveys in order to explore any differences but affirm similarities. Further research could be completed, comparing the seven themes that I shared here to other school leadership standards, similar to what I had done in Table 7. The aforementioned research could inform and perhaps enhance effective training programs for school leaders, particularly for Christian school leaders.

I recommend performing quantitative surveys and testing of the seven themes from this study in order to substantiate and possibly enhance the themes. This could be accomplished by sharing these seven themes with the superintendents, their boards, and their staff and surveying them on the effectiveness of these themes but also on the possibility of other themes of effective leadership practices. Surveying the broader group would provide a more robust perspective on effective Christian school leadership.

I recommend interviewing board members and school staff in this research on effective practices. Beyond the surveys referenced above, interviewing these groups would give greater

insight into the seven themes as well as other themes or practices that Christian school superintendents should be using. This also would provide more insight into effective and successful Christian school leadership.

I recommend deeper research into each of the seven themes. Because of their breadth and depth as well as their applicability to Christian school leadership, greater understanding of the themes and their application to the calling of leadership would be beneficial for schools, their boards, and their leaders. This research could be performed quantitatively through surveys, inquiring into these effective practice themes. It also could be performed qualitatively through observations of meetings and school days as well as interviews of Christian school board members, staff, and leaders.

After completing this research project, I find there is certainly other research that needs to be completed in order to deepen the understanding of effective leadership practices of Christian school superintendents; however, these seven themes and their supporting points and details certainly enhance the understanding of effective Christian school leadership by their superintendents and the credulity of my findings and the seven themes

Concluding Thoughts

Effective leadership practices of Christian school superintendents can seem nebulous, vague, and fleeting to some practitioners. However, the sense of calling by God to leadership and the resulting passion and commitment to Christian education for the Kingdom of God and his children by these eight superintendents give us seven key leadership themes that provide direction and clarity for leadership in Christian schools:

- Calling – God has called Christian school superintendents to their positions, and they have responded in faith through obedience.

- Mission – The mission of Christian education is to share the truth and love of Jesus with our students so that they will go and do the same in the lives that God calls each of them to.
- Relationships – Within the service and work of Christian education, relationships are key – relationships with staff, students, parents, donors, and the community all supporting the mission and vision of Christian education.
- Board and Administration – Christian school leadership, the board and administration, focus on the mission and vision in order to support everyone involved in it.
- Talent and Passion – Christian school superintendents bring talent and passion to their positions by God’s grace and providence.
- Growth and Excellence – Christian schools and their leaders must be focused on growth, using a growth mindset, and excellence, forever improving their missions.
- Leadership Skills – Leadership in Christian schools requires specific leadership skills, habits and practices that serve others within the mission of the school.

With the great investment, commitment, and passion of Christian school superintendents comes sacrifice, challenge, and loss for them that must be recognized and supported. Nonetheless, it all must be counted as gain in service and love for God and others!

References

- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978) *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Ash, R. C., Hodge, P. H., & Connell, p. H. (2013). The recruitment and selection of principals who increase student learning. *Education*, 134(1), 94-100.
- Baldwin, M. (2012). *Leadership skills believed to enhance and expand leadership capacity and future sustainability of Christian k-12 school administrators* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3509681)
- Banke, S. S., Maldonado, N., & Lacey, C. H. (2012). Christian school leaders and spirituality. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 21(3), 235-264.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational leadership and organizational culture. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 17(1), 112-121.
- Beard, K. S. (2013). Character in action: A case of authentic educational leadership that advanced equity and excellence. *Journal of School Leadership*, 23(6), 88-108.
- Black, G. L. (2010). Correlational analysis of servant leadership and school climate. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 13(4), 437-466.
- Boyle, M., Haller, A., & Hunt, E. (2016). The leadership challenge: Preparing and developing catholic school principals. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 19(3), 293-316.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

- Canales, M. T., Tejeda-Delgado, C., & Slate, J. R. (2008). Leadership behaviors of superintendent/principals in small, rural school districts in texas. *Rural Educator*, 29(3), 1-7.
- Carman, R. R. (2009). *Preferred characteristics and diversity of top leadership teams in a christian school* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3409993)
- Cole, C. J. (2016). *Exploring the predictive value of moral attentiveness and resilience for exemplary organizational leadership* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 10107386)
- Collins, J. C. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Council, E. e., & Cooper, B. S. (2011). Leading classical christian schools: An exploratory study of headmasters. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 20(2), 117-137.
- Covey, S. R. (1991). *Principle-centered leadership*. New York, NY: Summit Books.
- Covey, S. R. (2004a). *The 7 habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Covey, S. R. (2004b). *The 8th habit: From effectiveness to greatness*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Dantley, M. E. (2003). Purpose-driven leadership: The spiritual imperative to guiding schools beyond high-stakes testing and minimum proficiency. *Education & Urban Society*, 35(3), 273-291.

- Danzberger, J.P. (1994). Governing the nation's schools: The case for restructuring school boards. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75(5), 367-373.
- Downton, J. V. (1973). *Rebel leadership: Commitment and charisma in a revolutionary process*. New York: Free Press.
- Drucker, P. (2001). *The essential drucker*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Duhigg, C. (2012). *The power of habit: Why we do what we do in life and in business*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Fadare, S. (2016). Christian school leaders and spirituality: A reaction to banke, maldonado, and lacey. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 25(1), 86-93.
- Ferguson, J. W., Jr. (2018). *The headmaster as pastor: Examining the pastoral leadership of evangelical christian heads of school*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (Order No. 10807819).
- Fine, J., Gordon, V. H., & Israel, M. S. (2008). Partnership for faith-based leadership development: An educational model. *Educational Forum*, 72(2), 138-150.
- Forner, M., Bierlein-Palmer, L., & Reeves, P. (2012). Leadership practices of effective rural superintendents: Connections to waters and marzano's leadership correlates. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 27(8), 1-13.
- Garrison, J. (2013). *Characteristics of an effective district leader* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3608078)
- Glossary of Education Reform. (2013). <https://www.edglossary.org/shared-leadership/>
- Greenleaf, R. K. (2002). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

- Harrison, S. and Allen, J. (2017). Leadership in private christian schools: Perceptions of administrators. *Journal of the International Christian Community for Teacher Education*, 12(2).
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1988). *Managing of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources* (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hesse, H. (1956). *The journey to the east*. New York, NY: Noonday Press.
- Holter, A. A. & Frabutt, J. M. (2012). Mission driven and data informed leadership. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice*, 15(2), 253-269.
- Horine, J. E., Frazier, M. A., & Edmister, R. O. (1998). The baldrige as a framework for assessing leadership practices. *Planning and Changing*, 29(1), 2-23.
- Ireh, M. & Bailey, J. (1999). A study of superintendents' change leadership styles using the situational leadership model. *American Secondary Education*, 27(4), 22-32.
- Johnson, R. B. (2008). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. In F. Pyrczak (ed.) *Evaluative Research in Academic Journals* (pp. 139 – 145). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Pub.
- Klar, H. W. & Brewer, C. A. (2013). Successful leadership in high-needs schools: An examination of core leadership practices enacted in challenging contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(5), 768-808.
- Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (2012). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations*. San Francisco, CA: The Leadership Challenge, A Wiley Brand.
- Kowalski, T. J. (2006). *The school superintendent: theory, practice, and cases*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Kuyper, A. (2009). *Lectures on calvinism: Six lectures from the stone foundation lectures delivered at princeton university*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Leithwood, K. (1995). *Effective school district leadership: Transforming politics into education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Leithwood, K., & Mascal, B. (2008). Collective leadership effects on student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(4), 529-561.
- Lencioni, P. (2012). *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B.A. (2005). *School leadership that works: from research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Masumoto, M., & Brown-Welty, S. (2009). Case study of leadership practices and school-community interrelationships in high-performing, high-poverty, rural california high schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 24(1), 1-18.
- McCormick, J. G. (2011). *The personal characteristics and professional skills defining superintendent effectiveness* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3491234)
- Meadows, J. M. (2007). *Leadership skills believed to enhance and expand the leadership capacity and sustainability of future private school administrators* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3253581)
- Mosenthal, J., Lipson, M., Tornello, S., Russ, B., & Mekkelsen, J. (2004). Contexts and practices of six schools successful in obtaining reading achievement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104(5), 343-367.

- National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2015). Professional standards for educational leaders (PSEL).
- Nettles, S., & Herrington, C. (2007). Revisiting the importance of the direct effects of school leadership on student achievement: The implications for school improvement policy. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82(4), 724-736.
- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Oyinlade, A. O., Gellhaus, M., & Darboe, K. (2003). Essential behavioral qualities for effective leadership in schools for students who are visually impaired: A national study. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 97(7), 389-402.
- Ozar, L. I., & Weitzel-O'Neill, P. P. (2013). National catholic school standards: Focus on governance and leadership. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 17(1), 157-162.
- Parris, D. L. & Peachey, J. W. (2013). A systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organizational contexts. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 113, 377-393.
- Pennings, R. & Wiens, K. (2011). Cardus Educational Survey: Phase I report. Hamilton, ON, Canada: Cardus. Retrieved from <https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/publications/2867/cardus-education-survey-phase-i-report-2011/>
- Powell, C. J. (2018). *A phenomenological study of exemplary elementary school principals leading through conversational intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 10810757).

- Printy, S. M., (2008). Leadership for teacher learning: A community of practice perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(2), 187-226.
- Rath, T. & Conchie, B. (2008). *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams, and why people follow*. New York, NY: Gallup Press.
- Reed, L. R., & Swaminathan, R. (2016). An urban school leader's approach to school improvement. *Urban Education*, 51(9), 1096-1125.
- Rodgers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Ross, J. A., & Gray, P. (2006). School leadership and student achievement: The mediating effects of teacher beliefs. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29(3), 798-822.
- Rough, D. (2008). *An analysis of the mission statement of K-12 christian schools: Their components and the value they hold for the organizational leader* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3344674)
- Rowold, J. & Heinitz, K. Transformational and charismatic leadership: Assessing the convergent, divergent, and criterion validity of the LMQ and CKS. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18, 121-133.
- Schuttloffel, M. S. (2013). Contemplative leadership practice: The influences of character on catholic school leadership. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice*, 17(1), 81-103.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). *Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Siccone, F. (2012). *Essential skills for effective school leadership*. Upper Saddle River: NJ: Pearson.

- Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. New York, NY: Portfolio/Penguin.
- Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: a distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(1), 3-34.
- Stewart, J. (2006). Transformational leadership: An evolving concept examined through the works of Burns, Bass, Avolio, and Leithwood. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 54, 1-29.
- Stogdill, R. M. (1963). *Manual for the leader behavior description questionnaire – form XII: An experiment revision*.
- Stone, A. G., Russell, R. F., & Patterson, K. (2004). Transformational versus servant leadership: a difference in leader focus. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 25(4), 349-361.
- Striepe, M., Clarke, S., & O'Donoghue, T. (2014). Spirituality, values and the school's ethos: Factors shaping leadership in a faith-based school. *Issues in Educational Research*, 24(1), 85-97.
- Stueber, R. (2000). Leadership perspectives: Making a difference with servant leadership. *Lutheran Education*, 136(1), 49-55.
- Stueber, R. (2000). Leadership perspectives: Making a difference with 20/20 vision. *Lutheran Education*, 135(5), 274-284.
- Usmani, S. (2010). *Opening the door: A comparative study of leadership competencies of traditional and nontraditional superintendents* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3403659)

- Vaught, J. W., Jr. (2010). *Transactional and transformational leader behaviors and christian school enrollment* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3444356)
- Wahlstrom, K. L., & Louis, K. S. (2008). How teachers experience principal leadership: The roles of professional community, trust, efficacy, and shared responsibility. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(4), 458-495.
- Wallace, T. J., Ridenour, C. S., & Biddle, J. R. (1999). Preparedness of principals to be faith leaders of their schools. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 8(1), 107-129.
- Washington, Y. C., Miller, S. K., & Fiene, J. R. (2007). Their work, identity, and entry to the profession. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 5(4), 263-283.
- West, C. E. (2011). School leadership teaming. *Principal*, 90(3), 10-13.
- Williams, J. D. (2008). *The indicators of engaging leadership for private christian schools in texas* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3340599)
- Wilkes, C. G. (1996). *Jesus on leadership: Becoming a servant leader*. Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1990). On seeking – and rejecting – validity in qualitative research. In E.W. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate* (pp.121-152). New York: Teachers College Press.

Appendix A

LBDQ Definition of Subscales

1. Representation: speaks and acts as the representative of the group.
2. Demand Reconciliation: reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system.
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty: is able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset.
4. Persuasiveness: uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions.
5. Initiation of Structure: clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected.
6. Tolerance and Freedom: allows followers scope for initiative, decision and action.
7. Role Assumption: actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering leadership to others.
8. Consideration: regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers.
9. Production Emphasis: applies pressure for productive output.
10. Predictive Accuracy: exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately.
11. Integration: maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts.
12. Superior Orientation: maintains cordial relations with superiors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status.

Appendix B

Christian (Protestant) and Catholic Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Schools

Christian (Protestant) School Standards from Christian Schools International	Catholic School Standards from the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness
Strand 1: Leading with a Purpose: mission, governance, fiscal responsibilities, staff, and student health and safety	Standard 1: An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence and service.
Strand 2: Teaching for Learning: curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Standard 2: An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life.
Strand 3: Leading for Learning: instructional leadership, teacher as leader, and learning for leading	Standard 3: An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.
Strand 4: Learning in Community: nurturing and caring for students, practicing Christian community, Christ-honoring community, and interaction with community	Standard 4: An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.
	Standard 5: An excellent Catholic school has a governing body (person or persons) which recognizes and respects the role(s) of the appropriate and legitimate authorities, and exercises responsible decision making (authoritative, consultative, advisory) in collaboration with the leadership team for development and oversight of the school's fidelity to mission, academic excellence, and operational vitality.
	Standard 6: An excellent Catholic school has a qualified leader/leadership team empowered by the governing body to realize and implement the school's mission and vision.
	Standard 7: An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century

skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.

Standard 8: An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.

Standard 9: An excellent Catholic school provides programs and services aligned with the mission to enrich the academic program and support the development of student and family life.

Standard 10: An excellent Catholic school provides a feasible three to five year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets and is the result of a collaborative process, emphasizing faithful stewardship.

Standard 11: An excellent Catholic school operates in accord with published human resource/personnel policies, developed in compliance with (arch)diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies, which affect all staff (clergy, religious women and men, laity and volunteers) and provide clarity for responsibilities, expectations and accountability.

Standard 12: An excellent Catholic school develops and maintains a facilities, equipment, and technology management plan designed to continuously support the implementation of the educational mission of the school.

Standard 13: An excellent Catholic school enacts a comprehensive plan for institutional advancement based on a compelling mission through communications, marketing, enrollment management, and development.

Appendix C

Comparing Professional Standards for Educational Leaders with Authors on

Superintendents in Christian Schools

Professional standards for educational leaders from NPBEA (formerly ISLLC)	Williams (in no order of priority; grouped according to standards from NPBEA in the first column)	Baldwin (in no order of priority; grouped according to standards from NPBEA in the first column)	Meadows (2007) 23 leadership skills (in no order of priority; grouped according to standards from NPBEA in the first column)
Mission, Vision, and Core Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Spiritual leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to Christian education • Honesty • Humility • Integrity • Mission driven • Spiritual maturity • Trustworthy • Willingness and sense of God's calling on life • Wisdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and evaluate vision, mission, and goals • Communicate and sell vision, mission, and goals • Ability to identify and articulate a compelling vision • Build share meanings, values, and goals • Committed to the core beliefs and philosophy of education of the institution
Ethics and Professional Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role model • Visible • Strong work ethic • Positive attitude • Discernment • Counsel • Natural in the position • Influencing • Creativity • Flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courage • Decisive • Discernment with tough decisions • Discipline and focus • Does the right thing under adverse circumstances • Maintain confidentiality • Positive attitude • Self-controlled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for the spiritual needs of the school community • The ability to discern • Careful listening • Integrity • Servant's heart • Teachable • Strong work ethic • Dedicated • Flexible • Responsible, reliable, and dependable • Manage time and work load effectively

Equity and Cultural Responsiveness for educational opportunity for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional intelligence for self • Emotional intelligence with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional intelligence • Interpersonal skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project self-confidence and self-discipline
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment			
Community of Care and Support for Students: inclusive, caring, and supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassionate 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for staff, students, parents, and programs to the board and other publics
Professional Capacity of School Personnel		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire people better than oneself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, recruit, and retain quality employees • Maintain personal, spiritual, and professional growth
Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifelong learner • Well-read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for staff, students, parents, and programs to the board and other publics
Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community: meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community builder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding today's parents and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain healthy relationships with internal and external constituencies
Operations and Management of the school managed well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial acuity • Highly productive • Listening skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, concise communication • Delegate responsibilities and empower others to make significant decisions
School Improvement: continuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning • Make tough decisions when necessary 	

Appendix D

Connecting and Comparing Leadership Concepts to Covey's

7 Habits of Highly Effective People and The 8th Habit

Covey: <i>7 Habits of Highly Effective People</i> :	Collins: <i>Good to Great</i>	Kouzes and Posner: <i>The Leadership Challenge</i>	Duhigg: <i>The Power of Habit</i>	Sinek: <i>Start with Why</i>	Lencioni: <i>The Advantage</i>	Rath and Conchie: <i>Strengths Based Leadership</i>
1. Be Proactive: avoid having to react by being proactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level Five Leadership: modest and willful, humble and fearless Confront the brutal facts 	Search for Opportunities	Affirms Covey's philosophy of habits			Strengths-based focus for leaders, utilizing the strengths of their followership in order to lead well.
2. Begin with the end in mind: be clear on the vision/ mission of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus metaphor – having the right people on the bus on the right seat Stockdale Paradox – organization will prevail while confronting the brutal facts Hedgehog concept – who we are and what we are good at guide us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify values, affirm shared values Envision the future 	Backing on the philosophy of habits	We have to know WHY we are doing WHAT we are doing HOW	Having a cohesive leadership team, focused on the “end”	Strengths-focused, centering on strengths of leader as the end in mind
3. Put first things first: manage from the left side of the brain, and lead from the right side of the	Create a culture of discipline	Leaders need to live the shared values and to teach others model the values	Habits of leadership and management; Backing on the philosophy of habits	The discipline of HOW and the consistency of WHAT while know WHY; earn trust by	Group effectiveness, have to Trust – Conflict – Commitment – Accountability – Results; leaders must build and have trusting relationships	Strengths-focus as the priority

	brain. Prioritize and focus – quadrant II focus!			sharing the same values	established by keeping your word		
4.	Think Win/Win or no deal; interdepend ence: “Win/Win is not a technique; it’s a total philosophy of human interaction.”	The Hedgehog Concept brings unity and focus in relationships through three concepts: the passion, what we are best at, and the economic driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Search for opportunities• Experim ent and take risks• Foster collabora tion• Strength en others	Backing on the philosophy of habits	Explains the Law of Diffusion of Innovations , which was described by Rodgers in 1962 in his book <i>Diffusion of Innovations</i> ; how people join ideas or movements	His first discipline: build a cohesive leadership team, working together	Each members’ strengths bring a unified functioning as a team
5.	Seek first to understand, then to be understood		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find a common purpose by listening to others.	Backing on the philosophy of habits	To understand and to be understood, find the answers to WHY?, HOW?, and WHAT?	Create and focus on clarity by asking and answering these questions: 1. Why do we exist? 2. How do we behave? 3. What do we do? 4. How will we succeed? 5. What is most important, right now?	Using and focusing on the strengths of the team
6.	Synergize: the first five habits coming together	Around the Hedgehog Concept	Inspire a shared vision around common ideals, to enlist and strengthen others, enabling them to act, animating the vision	Backing on the philosophy of habits	All focus on WHY then HOW then WHAT to create synergy	Who must do what? 6. Pursue, provide, and push for clarity throughout the organization	Unifying of each team’s strengths
7.	Sharpen the saw: encircling the six previous habits: physical,			Backing on the philosophy of habits	Still focusing on WHY		

<p>mental, spiritual, and social</p> <p>8. Find your voice; inspire others to find theirs: problem – seeing people as things not beings</p>	<p>Hedgehog concept – we all find voice in it/from it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can you be the best in the world at? • What drives your economic engine? <p>What are you deeply passionate about?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen others • Expect the best in people • Give regular feedback • Say thank you • Recognize accomplishments • Provide incentives • Get close to people • Leadership is everyone's business! 	<p>Backing on the philosophy of habits</p>	<p>We all need to know our WHY and the organization's WHY</p>	<p>Determining strengths, synergizing with other members' strengths</p>
---	--	--	--	---	---

Appendix E

School Leader Questionnaire for Demographic and Leadership Information

Please feel free to alter or expand this document to adequately respond to these questions.

Your name: _____ Your current school: _____

Current role: _____ Years you have served in current role: _____

- Current number of teaching staff members (in full time equivalent number, FTE): ____
- Current number of support staff (administration, custodial, transportation; in FTE): ____
- Current school's grade levels served: _____
- Current total number of students total in these grades: _____
 - Ethnic make-up of the students by percentages: _____
 - The school is located in and serves primarily urban, suburban, and/or rural communities: _____
 - Average socio-economic make-up of your family population: _____

Years of teaching experience, if any: _____

Years of teaching in a CSI school, if any: _____

Years of experience in administration in education (public or private schools): _____

School data for each school where you have served in any capacity:

School	Location	Your Role	Years Served	# of Staff at time of service	# of Students at time of service	Grades served

Years served in other administrative roles not in education, if any: _____

Explain: _____

Formal administrative/leadership training:

Training or degree	School or program	Description of training

What do you believe are the five most effective practices of a successful Christian school superintendent?:

Effective practices	Explanation

Please feel free to alter or expand this document to adequately respond to these questions.

Appendix F

Interview Protocol for Effective Superintendents

Central Question: What are the effective leadership practices of successful superintendents associated with growth and improvement in CSI schools' operations and student learning?

I will send these questions to the interviewees a week ahead of the interview to allow time to reflect and prepare.

1. How did you come to be a Christian school leader? What experiences have shaped and prepared you for leadership as a superintendent?
2. Describe the training that you have received preparing you to be a superintendent, formal and informal, in a Christian school?
3. Describe your role as superintendent? What do you do? What's important to you?
4. Why do you serve as a Christian school superintendent?
5. What are your effective practices or habits in being a Christian school superintendent?
How have you been effective? How do you know when you are effective as a superintendent? What are the struggles and challenges?
 - a. A way to think about *effective* might be the “ability to convert creativity, mental ability, and knowledge into results; thus, the ability to achieve” according to Drucker (2001, p. 192).
6. What do your followers expect of you in your leadership?
7. What does it mean to be *successful* as a Christian school superintendent?
 - a. What is a successful Christian school?
 - b. What do you struggle with in leadership? What challenges do you see and experience?

8. Describe the style or type of leadership that you use or have adopted?
9. What would you like to share with me about the experience of being a Christian school superintendent that you haven't had the opportunity to share yet?

Appendix G

Consent Form



Consent Form

Effective Leadership Practices of Successful Superintendents in Christian Schools

IRBNet Tracking Number: 1162107-1

Dear Superintendent,

You are invited to participate in a research study about effective leadership practices of successful superintendents in Christian schools, which involves researching practices, habits, and skills necessary to lead Christian schools effectively. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you have been identified by other organizational leaders from Christian Schools International (CSI), the Van Lunen Center, and the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education (CACE) as a successful superintendent in Christian schools. You may be eligible to participate in this study because you have served as a superintendent in your present school for 5 years or more and have been identified as successful in that role. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not you would like to participate. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study.

This study is being conducted by Paul Bootsma as part of his doctoral requirements, including a dissertation. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to research and describe the effective practices of successful superintendents in Christian schools. School leaders in all schools typically come up through the ranks from teacher to assistant principal to principal and on to superintendent as passions, interests, and qualifications allow. It seems that many of these leaders receive formal leadership training from a university. Schools and their supporting organizations seem to have ideas, documents, research, and evidence of their expectations for these leaders; however, many school leaders and school boards don't heed or regard the research to inform their leadership, particularly in private Christian schools.

I am interested in understanding effective leadership practices of successful superintendents in private Christian schools, particularly schools that are members of Christian Schools International (CSI), in order to improve the organization and student learning in Christian schools as well as the individual leaders within them. Additionally, private Christian school boards need to be able to encourage, direct, and guide their leaders. Ultimately, I hope to improve Christian school leadership, which will improve the implementation and fulfillment of the mission of these schools to challenge students to grow spiritually, academically, physically, and socially.

Much research, thinking, and writing has been completed on leadership, particularly in the area of business and into public education. My research is rooted in effective leadership practices or habits in the realm of business and/or educational leadership from experts such as Stephen Covey and Robert Marzano. Ultimately, research and literature has informed me and this research will add to the collective body of research.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you, the participant, to do the following things:

- Fill out a questionnaire about your leadership and the school where you serve
- Participate in a one-on one interview with Paul Bootsma that we will do over Zoom conferencing, which I will record in order to create transcripts. I will interview a total of 8-10 superintendents in this study.
 - I will share the transcripts with you and have a follow up conversation with you in order to clarify or correct any of the data.
- This process may take you up to three hours to complete.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

The study has risks.

- There is a possibility of a data breach: Someone could hack my computer, break into my office and into the fireproof safe to gain access to the transcripts.
- There is possible emotional distress in recalling traumatic or distressing events: If the participant shares stories or experiences that were distressing, the retelling/sharing could be stressful, even traumatic.
- There will be a request for personal or sensitive information in interviews: The participant could share personal or sensitive information from their leadership experiences.
- There may be a sense of mental fatigue or embarrassment: A participant could grow fatigued from the length of the interview as well as becoming embarrassed from incidents in their leadership.

Precautions and safeguards I will use to eliminate or minimize the risks:

- Relating to the participant, encouraging them despite their struggles.
- Reminding the participant that they can stop their participation at any time.
- Assuring the participant of the confidentiality of the study.
- Assuring the participant of my due diligence in ensuring security of the data, including documents, transcripts, and video recordings.

There are no direct benefits that you will receive for participating in this study.

Privacy

Your privacy will be protected while you participate in this study in several ways:

- I will assign a pseudonym to the transcripts of your interview. The record of the pseudonym will be kept in a separate location from the transcripts.
- All physical records or electronic backup of this research will be kept in a locked office in a locked fireproof filing cabinet. All electronic data will be kept on a password protected computer and/or website.

- All interviews and follow-up conversations will be done by Zoom video conferencing and will be recorded; however, the participant will schedule the date and time of these interviews. These interviews will be performed in my private office or in a private location.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you. The types of records I will create include the following:

- The school superintendent and school demographic questionnaire.
 - These will be stored on my school computer which is password protected.
 - If there are physical copies made, they will be stored in my locked office.
- The interview recordings in Zoom video conferencing:
 - These will be stored on my school computer which is password protected.
 - They will also be stored temporarily on the Zoom sight which is password protected.
- The interview transcripts:
 - These will be stored on my school computer which is password protected.
 - If there are physical copies made, they will be stored in my locked office.
- A research journal:
 - This will be stored on my school computer which is password protected.
- The data coding file:
 - These will be stored on my school computer which is password protected.
- The compiled data in the dissertation:
 - All participants and their schools will be assigned pseudonyms.

All signed consent forms will be kept for a minimum of three years upon completion of the study. Institutional Review Board officials at the University of St. Thomas reserve the right to inspect all research records to ensure compliance.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with me, the school where you work, any other schools, Christian Schools International, nor the University of St. Thomas. There are no penalties or consequences if you choose not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will not be used in any way. You can withdraw by verbally telling me at any point in this process, emailing me at pbootsma@lynchs.org, or calling my cell phone at 360.306.4048. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Paul Bootsma. You may ask any questions that you have now and any time during or after the research procedures. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 360.306.4048 or at pbootsma@lynchs.org. My advisor is Dr. Karen Westberg, and she may be contacted at 651-962-4985. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6035 or muen0526@stthomas.edu with any questions or concerns.

Statement of Consent

I have had a conversation with the researcher about this study and have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I give permission to be audio and video recorded during this study.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix H
Transcript Coding Sample

0:32:41 PB: That's good. To expand more into your role as superintendent, would you please just describe your role as superintendent? What does that mean?

Transcript	1st read – literal, what it's about	2nd – larger categories, themes, ideas
<p>0:32:57 SUPT: I hope it's more than board leadership, but I do think that's a really important part of what I do as a superintendent. Whether it's... And I know there's value there because I know that, and I believe that, board governing structures and board members, while they don't do our work for us, if we have a poor structure and system in place then they interfere with and try to do our work. A lot of my time is spent, certainly, ensuring that the Board relationships are strong, that my relationship with the executives committee is strong, that I follow through with them and that I nurture those relationships. That's really a good, I don't want to say it's a significant part of my job, but it's a very important part of my job and I'm very purposeful in that.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board leadership – running and working well - Otherwise, board leadership can interfere with our work - Strong board relations - Nurture board relations – important part of my job – purposeful leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board leadership – relationships strong - Clear distinction between board and supt leadership – who is supposed to do what and when
<p>0:33:40 SUPT: I certainly spend time with, and think through carefully and work with, a team of people relative to all of our advancement and development efforts and admissions efforts, and so I provide leadership and make sure that folks are moving forward in a direction that adds value to their particular area. I work very closely with our CFO as it relates to strategic financial planning and management. I work directly, obviously as you do, with donors and you think through carefully what it is that is... How to articulate where you're headed and then to strategically work with donors to have them help you get there. I certainly, and I sit on our administrative PLT as an equal member, though I'm not sure if it's equal in their minds, but regardless, I see it as equal, as they provide curriculum leadership, so I ensure that the structures are there. Then I get out of the way so that they can do the work that they're called to do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide leadership of advancement and development - Make sure folks are moving forward - CFO – strategic financial planning - Work with donors – work directly with them - Professional Learning Team – member, - Ensure structures are in place the get out of the way so they can work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advancement and Development work, admissions - CFO work, support - Donors - Admin team – PLT – professional learning team – participate as an equal but let them do their work

Appendix I

Coding Sample for Key Themes for Effective Leadership Practices

Effective Christian school superintendents...

1. Have a Faith in Jesus and His calling them to leadership in Christian education	Superintendent 1	Superintendent 2	Superintendent 3
a. Spiritual leadership, shepherding; living the Christian life	<p>Death, tragedy in the school community – “mourner-in-chief”</p> <p>Authority and restoration in leadership</p> <p>Grace in leadership</p> <p>Followers of Christ</p> <p>Alignment between talents, gifts, and this work in leadership</p> <p>Have to be tuned to God in order to lead for God</p> <p>Strength in faith in order to be able to lead</p> <p>Faith in God has to be natural, not tagged on</p> <p>Deny self – servant; Deny self – servant, but then care for self, too – could seem selfish</p> <p>Leader has to be in Spiritual growth – Faith</p> <p>Family life and faith life have to be in</p>	<p>I love Jesus, learning, and thinking – 3 big loves, sweet spot</p> <p>Supporting and encouraging staff – teachers</p> <p>Leadership has to be about principles of leadership NOT the leader</p> <p>Church, Bible study</p> <p>Staff expectations on church</p> <p>Expectation to follow Jesus – faithful presence</p> <p>Servant leadership for Jesus – confessional education for Jesus</p> <p>Transformational?</p> <p>Love for Jesus not other things</p> <p>Wholeness as a person – faithful to Jesus</p>	<p>Faithful follower – trusted God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being the shepherd - Spiritual leadership - Shepherd – spiritual leader - Spiritual direction, emphasis, leadership

	order in order to lead well		
	Not about the power of leadership		
b. Spiritual faith, growth, and fulfillment	<p>Faith growing through one-on-one relationships</p> <p>Faith questioning</p> <p>Spiritual growth – important</p> <p>Deeper awareness that this is where he is supposed to be and what he is supposed to be doing</p> <p>Commitment to and fit with Christian ed</p>	<p>I love Jesus, learning, and thinking – 3 big loves, sweet spot</p> <p>Committed to faith in Jesus</p> <p>Faith growth – daily devotions and prayer</p> <p>Lead from who you are</p> <p>Leadership practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's guiding hand in all of this - Keeps us on our knees, praying – relying on God not ourselves - Spiritual practices - Follower of Christ - God not punishing
c. Calling, Career development – vocation not work a. Not for the Money	<p>Emerging leadership</p> <p>Makes my heart sing – heart response</p> <p>Why I serve</p> <p>Use of gifts</p> <p>I need power so you can flourish</p>	<p>I love Jesus, learning, and thinking – 3 big loves, sweet spot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School FIT – is this where I belong - It's not a job; it's a calling - Superintendency is CALLING, VOCATIONAL, not just a job - Not about compensation or benefits, it's about using gifts, talents - Not interested in more money - Whole picture – the call of Christ, following Jesus - Wholeness NOT acting, genuine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was a calling – God's leading - Tragedy created opportunity to help - God's calling, her obedience to it – leadership - Calling into leadership - God created me to lead – reflecting back - Calling – family of wealth, giving, looks outward, investing time and energy - Personal responsibility to lead, to do something

		leadership and follower of Jesus	
d. Spiritual attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reflective, thoughtful, meditative b. Humility c. Trustworthy, integrity d. Confidential e. Patient f. Vulnerable, honest, truth g. Gratitude 	INTEGRITY Speaking truth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Humility - Avoid pride, defensiveness, lashing out - Grace in change, being gracious - Open and vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NOT patient with people – patient - Gratitude - Recognizing people - Supporting and encouraging staff – teachers - Trust – have to have trust - Swallowing our ego, pride - Struggles, challenges - Impatience - Leadership ego is a problem - Self-control - Manage EGO – others first - Emotional need to be liked – EGO – become ineffective - Integrity – self and organization - Authenticity – vulnerability, confessional - Honest vulnerability – not vulnerability for ego - Humility, serving - Self-reflection – core value 	Humility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Humility – make mistakes, apologize